

Yosemite Bible Conference 1996-01 More Like Christ

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christlikeness and provides practical ways to achieve it, including beholding the glory of the Lord, being transformed into the same image, and following Jesus' example.

Duration: 44:01

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, 2 Corinthians 3:18

Topics: "Christ Likeness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a soldier named Tom who was absent from parade because he was worshipping Jesus. The speaker then introduces the topic of Christlikeness and how believers can become more like Jesus. He emphasizes that holiness and Christlikeness are essential for effective evangelism and a fruitful prayer life. The speaker highlights that God's purpose for believers is to conform them to the image of Jesus, and that this transformation brings glory to God and offers the world an alternative.

Transcript

49 years of the Yosemite Conference. I don't suppose there's anyone here who's been at all of those. That would mean you are 49 years or better.

But Bill Bush would come close to it, wouldn't he? Yeah. Let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We're going to be talking about Christ's resurrection. And how you and I can be more like the Lord Jesus. I was at a missionary conference in June.

A young fellow from Vancouver got up. He's out going to Mexico. And he prayed, Lord, make us more like Christ and less like us.

But I thought that was a great prayer. Make us more like Christ and less like us. That's what we want to be talking about during these sessions together.

How we can be more like the Lord Jesus and less like what we are now. The answer to most of our problems in the Christian life is the lack of Christlikeness. The lack of true holiness.

For instance, we often want to know, how can I know the will of God? It's interesting, the Bible doesn't give you ten steps to know the will of God. It tells you to be holy. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding and all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path.

And it's interesting, when you come to all of those questions that so often plague us in the Christian life, it takes us back inevitably to this. We want to know how to be more effective in evangelism. Well, the Bible doesn't give you ten steps as to how to be more effective in evangelism.

Jesus said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Goes right back to holiness. It goes back to Christlikeness every time.

I think that's very, very significant. You want to have an effective prayer life. I think we all do.

We had a young visitor from Israel recently. He said to me, how much do you pray? That's an awful question to ask a person, isn't it? I said, not enough. How else could I answer it? Not enough.

Well, you want to have a more effective prayer life. The Lord Jesus says, if you abide in me and I in you, you shall ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. Abide in me and I in you.

What does that mean? It means to walk in close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. To walk in communion with him day by day. So, God doesn't give us a neat set of do's, how to's.

Rather, he emphasizes our personal life. And he says the rest will fall in line. And it's absolutely true.

I don't think that any of us would quarrel over the fact that we should all be more like the Lord Jesus. That's a given. There's really no higher goal in the Christian life than to be like Jesus.

In our discipleship intern training over 23 years, the beginning of every year we ask the fellows, what were their goals? And I think that in all of those 23 years, I can only think of one fellow who ever said to be like Jesus. Now, several of the interns are here and they're going to rush up to me afterwards and say, who was that? Well, frankly, I don't remember. But that was great.

What is your goal in life? His goal in life was to be more like the Lord Jesus. There's no higher ambition in all the world than that. No loftier goal than that.

One of God's great purposes. Just think of this. One of God's great purposes in our lives is to conform us to the image of his lovely son.

And that rather humiliates me when I think of it. And I think of what I am. There's so much unlikeness to Jesus in my life, it would sink a battleship.

It's a very humbling thing to think that God in heaven is interested in me and in you. And he wants us to be more like his blessed son. Of course, when we see the Lord Jesus, we're going to be transformed into his likeness.

It's going to be automatic. But it's more glory for God if it's taking place down here. And you know what? It gives the world an alternative.

It gives the world an option to see people who are Christ-like. You know, a lot of people in the world are disgusted with the world. Did you know that? They are.

You hear it all the time. They're worried. Where are we going? What's happening? Well, you know, our job as Christians is by our lives to let them know there's an option.

There's an alternative. We are to be an alternative society in this world in which we're living. So, how is this going to take place? It's one thing to know what to do.

It's another thing to know how to do it. Somebody has said this and I like it. The image of God is not seen in our bodies, but in the beauty of the renewed mind and heart.

Holiness, love, humility, meekness, kindness, and forgiveness. These are the things that make up the divine character. These are the things we want to develop in our lives.

Paul tells us in the verse that we have read that we're changed into his likeness by beholding him. That's interesting, isn't it? Ironside wrote a book with that title, *Changed by Beholding*. Let's just go over the verse and dissect it.

But we all, all Christians, not unsaved people, all Christians, we all, with unveiled faith. What's an unveiled faith? What it means is nothing between my faith and God. How can I be assured of an unveiled faith? By confessing and forsaking all known sin in my life.

That's what gives me an unveiled faith. By not letting sins accumulate. By keeping the record absolutely clear.

We all with unveiled faith. Beholding, this means gazing. It's not just a temporary glance.

It's a gazing. Beholding the glory of the Lord. What does that mean? Well, it means I go to the Gospels, for instance, and I study the life of the Lord Jesus here as a man on earth.

The only perfect life ever lived on this planet. And I gaze at that. And I admire it.

I marvel at him. Beholding as in a glance the glory of the Lord. And I think of his glory now at the right hand of God as well.

The glory of the Lord. What does glory mean? Well, it means all his marvelous attributes. All his excellencies.

All his virtues. The glories of the Lord. Are changed into the same image.

What does it mean? It means the more you and I are occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we become like him. How does that take place? Are changed into the same image by the Spirit of God. In other words, the Spirit of God is working in our lives to conform us to the image of the Lord.

From glory to glory. From one degree of glory to another. Even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

It's not an automatic thing. It's not something that takes place in a moment of time. It's something that the Spirit of God is doing for us all the time.

We seek to follow him. We seek to walk as he walks. To be guided by his example.

And Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2.21 For to this you are called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. Now, it goes without saying that we'll never achieve his perfection as long as we're down here on earth. But that shouldn't be an excuse, should it? That shouldn't be an excuse.

When we see him, yes, we'll be like him. Morally, spiritually, perfectly like him. But in the meantime, it should be a process.

We should be striving toward the goal. Now, although the Lord Jesus is our great example, sometimes it's very helpful to us to see some of his excellencies in the lives of his people. We're tempted to say, oh, well, he's Jesus.

And he's God. And he's perfect. And he has attributes that I'll never have.

But I'll tell you, it stops our mouths when we see Christ's likeness in his people. You can't argue against a fact. And I've learned an awful lot through the lives of men and women of God, whose lives, whose roots were deep in God.

It's just been an inspiration to be with them and to learn from them. For many, many years, I saw the teachings of Christian discipleship in the New Testament. Difficult verses.

Difficult verses. And, you know, I had 60 theological reasons why they didn't mean what they said. They really did.

Likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. I couldn't mean that. Couldn't.

Couldn't mean that. But, you know, I came in touch in the early 1950s with a bunch of people who didn't know that. They didn't know it didn't mean that.

And they said, either the Bible means what it says, or we ought to throw it away. And, you know, God honored that. That sounds almost irreverent to us, to say a thing like that.

No, it was very reverent. Either the Bible means what it says, or we ought to throw it away. And they said, by the grace of God, we're going to show that it does mean what it says.

And they started living a life of discipleship. And I tell you, their service crackled with the supernatural. They used to say things like that.

They used to say, if it's possible, there's no glory for God in it. If it's impossible, it can be done. I don't hear much like that today, do you? But that was it.

And I learned then that the teachings in the New Testament concerning discipleship, they were just what Jesus meant. Just exactly what Jesus meant. And it came alive to me in a way it never did before, when I saw blood-earnest disciples living that sort of a life.

So, that brings us to the central question, what is Jesus like, and how can I be more like him? How can I live so that others will see Jesus in me, so that they will take knowledge that I have been with Jesus? That's the problem that we face as we come. How can I imitate his character, his behavior, and his speech? Number one, the Lord Jesus was a man of the book. He was a man, his whole life was absorbed

in the word of God.

To me, it's just one of the most fundamental things in the Christian life, that we should be immersed day by day in the sacred scriptures. I look back, I shouldn't perhaps be looking back so much, but I look back at the early days before there was TV, and before the fast lane was 35 miles an hour, and life was rather slow and sedate. I want to tell you, I knew men and women of God at that time.

I can remember standing by the grave, the open grave of a man named William Huss. I was just a boy, just a boy. And he was, I used to say he was a descendant of John Huss.

But then I found that John Huss was a bachelor, so that's no longer true. But I can remember standing by that open grave as his body was lowered into the ground, thinking, I wish his brains could be transposed into mine. I guess that was the original transplant, me wishing that his brain, what I was thinking of was his knowledge of the word of God.

What I would give if I had his knowledge of the word, and I was just a little shaver at that time. Well, we've got away from it now. The Bible no longer holds that place in our lives that it should hold.

I remember some years ago I was asked to take the funeral of Fred Elliott up in Portland, Oregon. Fred was a great servant of the Lord, a great servant. He was also the father of Jim Elliott, one of the martyrs of Ecuador.

And I went up there, and there in the chapel, his body was there in the open casket. And as his body was laid out there, his Bible was there with his hands over the Bible like this. And you know, that spoke eloquently.

That was a more eloquent message than I could ever give that day. What did it say? It said, Fred Elliott was a man of the book. And he was, too.

And he preached the word of God. He went to the lonely, out-of-the-way places in Montana and Wyoming and places like that where there wasn't very much teaching of the word of God, and he spent his life teaching it there. What would you like to have in your casket with you? I'm afraid some of us would probably have the TV Guide.

Some of us probably would, to be really appropriate, we would have a portfolio of stocks and bonds. Maybe some golf clubs. Or a bank book.

I mean, if you were to have the thing that most speaks of your life, what would it be? Now's the time when those decisions are being made, aren't they? I don't think, if I'm going to be like the Lord Jesus, I'm going to be a man of the book. I'm going to be a person who loves the word of God. Loves the word of God.

A year ago, last October, we had Dave Hunt down speaking at a weekend conference with us. And that dear fellow was ministering the word of God, and every so often he had to interject. He said, I really love this book.

And you could tell he did. You could tell he did by the enthusiasm he had as he was ministering the scriptures to men and women. I really love this book.

I hope we all really love the book. I hope we all are giving it the place in our lives that it so richly deserves. That's the first thing.

The Lord Jesus was a man of the book. I want to be a man of the book. The Lord Jesus was a worshipper. He was a worshipper. Worshipping God the Father. All the time.

All the time. Everything he did was an act of worship to God the Father. Until it was culminated at Calvary's cross when he offered himself a sacrifice to God.

Tom Walton was a worshipper. Tom was recruited into the army. And he was placed in a battalion with men who had fought in North Africa.

And they didn't appreciate having this green recruit coming into their battalion. They were loathe to accept him. But you know, Tom won their hearts by his bravery in the first engagement that he was in.

And after a while, he got a new name. He was known as Christian. These ungodly, rough, hardened men called Tom Christian.

What made Tom so different from the rest of the men in his unit? What made him respected so highly? The answer is very simple. He made the worship of the Lord the first thing. In his life.

It was not unusual to find an entry in his diary that read like this. We attack at dawn. I will be up at four o'clock to worship my Lord.

One morning, he was absent from parade. And when his name was called, the officer said to the sergeant, Where is Walton? He said, I do not know, sir. He said, well, go and get him.

And he went and he found Tom Walton praying. He said, Walton, we're on parade. Get on parade.

What's the matter with you? Tom very quickly put on his equipment, made his way to the parade ground, and three or four days later, the same thing happened. The officer said, Sergeant, where is Walton? Walton said, I do not know, sir. He said, you go and find him.

So the sergeant went to Tom's tent. And there was Tom on his knees. The officer said, if this happens again, Walton, I'll parade you before the colonel.

And it did happen again. And this time he had to appear before the colonel who had been the one to decorate him after his bravery in the first engagement. Three times you've been absent from parade, Walton.

It's not a good thing for a corporal. It's not like you. What's wrong? Tom, in his beautiful, sweet way, said, well, Colonel, I began to worship my Lord Jesus.

I mean, you don't find language like this in the Army. Any of you ever been in the Armed Forces? This is not Armed Forces talk. He said, well, Colonel, he said, I began to worship my Lord Jesus.

He used to call him his beautiful Lord Jesus. And I cannot hear anything. I don't hear the bugle.

I don't hear the men. I don't hear anything, he said. I'm sorry.

Tom had reached that rare plateau of worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The rattle of equipment, the sound of the bugle, the noise of the men never penetrated to him. He was oblivious to it all.

At 19 years of age, in a battle in Borneo, two weeks before the armistice was sound, Tom Walton was ushered into the presence of the Lord. He was not, for the Lord took him. And hardened soldiers in that battalion began to weep because they had lost their Christian.

They had lost their Christian whom they loved dearly. The power of a worshiping life. When I was a boy, there was a servant of the Lord that came to our assembly.

His name was B.C. Greenman. I'm going back into ancient history. I remember one, this has nothing to do with the story, but I remember one time he had, he had a little testament and he gave, he gave my brother one and he gave me one on the promise that we would read it.

We took the testament, but we didn't keep the promise. But anyway, B.C. Greenman was an itinerant preacher among the assemblies in the early part of the century. Preached up in Canada, mostly, but also in the United States.

And at one time he became very, very discouraged in the work of the Lord. He felt that he was rejected on every hand. So he decided to abandon the ministry.

He was going to quit. And one night he walked down that country road toward the railroad station. And as he passed, he passed a miserable little home.

It was late at night. And inside that home, there was a dear Christian lady. She was doing the family wash late at night.

And she was singing. She was singing, Lamb of God, our souls adore thee. While upon thy face we gaze.

And B.C. Greenman said this. He said, here is one of God's priests. She's not singing for my ear.

But the sweet savor of her sacrifice going up to God has come down to me too. And he said, B.C. Greenman, you're a coward. Here's this woman living under very undesirable circumstances.

And she's a priest to God, offering up worship to God. B.C. Greenman, you're a coward. You have Christian fellowship.

You have so many mercies. And this child of God is a priest at the Golden Altar. And I so discouraged.

And B.C. Greenman was restored to hope afresh. And he turned around. He went back.

And he never did leave the ministry. Why? Because of a worshiper. You know, there's a sweetness, there's a fragrance about a person whose life is bathed in worship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I like that about Jacob. I can identify with Jacob. And there were a lot of mistakes in that dear guy's life.

But I want to tell you something. He went out worshiping. That's the way I want to go out.

Jacob went out worshiping, leaning on his staff. If I'm going to be like the Lord Jesus, I want to be a worshiper. The Lord Jesus was a man of meditation.

You can tell that. You can tell that by the things that he said. He was always meditating on the Word of God.

He talked about trees and wind and weather. And he made it his delight to bring heaven and earth together. He learned that everything in life has a spiritual meaning if you only have eyes to see it.

We have always thought of Yosemite as the place of stability. The everlasting hills, you know. They've been here for millennia, and they'll be here for millennia.

But now we know it's not a symbol of stability at all. But he remained us. So even in a rock slide, you can hear echoes of Hebrews chapter 1 coming to our ears.

Great to meditate on the things of God. We have a young fellow up in the Bay Area, David Reeve. And he works for the county in pest control.

I think that's a good way to put it. He's out looking for Mediterranean fruit flies and anything else that might harm the crops. And he was asked to speak at our assembly recently.

I wasn't there, but he was asked to speak. And he got up and he said, I'm going to speak about leprosy in the house. And some of the brethren thought, leprosy? You know, that fellow had been meditating as he was out chasing Mediterranean fruit flies.

He'd been meditating on the things of the Lord. And the people were really impressed and touched by the way he brought that together with scriptural principles. Wonderful.

How do you meditate? Just take a simple verse of scripture or a simple idea from the scripture and just think about it. And think about it. And think about it.

And pretty soon it opens up like the petals of a rose. Let me give you an example. When the Lord Jesus was crucified at the Cross of Calvary, there were three hours of darkness on the earth.

Three hours of darkness. Why? Why in the purposes of God was the earth enveloped in darkness? Well, we go to the poet and he says, well, might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in when Christ the mighty maker died for man his creature's sin. But that doesn't tell us why.

It tells us the appropriateness of it. But why were those three hours of darkness? If you had been standing before the cross, you couldn't have seen anything. Because it was total darkness.

Why was it total darkness? Having faced the problem bravely, we pass on. It's something for you to think about as you eat your lunch today. The Lord Jesus was a man of meditation.

Let us see the greatness of God in everything about us. Especially here at Yosemite. The greatness of God.

And link what we see with the scriptures. The Lord Jesus was a man of faith. He was a man of dependence upon God his Father.

He walked by faith. Recently I went through a time of anxiety. I don't think I shared it with anybody else.

But a time of real anxiety. And during that time, you know, God is so good. During that time, I read this statement by Andrew Murray.

That's great. That's exactly what our attitude should be in all of the trials of life. In the sorrows of life.

In the tragedies of life. Andrew Murray said, I am here by God's appointment. In his keeping.

Under his training. And for his time. Dear friend, that's faith.

Some of you probably came to the conference with heavy hearts. For one reason or another. Some of you came to the conference facing crises in life.

Let me commend that statement to you. I am here, that is, in that problem. I am here by God's appointment.

In his keeping. Under his training. And for his time.

And you know, that will give peace and poise in the changing circumstances of life. There's a brother in an assembly up in Vancouver. And he has ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease.

He has had it for seven years. The only thing in his body he can move now is his thumb. But you know, if you could ask him, what does ALS stand for? He would say, a loving savior.

Dear friend, that's victory. Huh? There's nothing they can do for it. No pill they can give for it.

No injection they can give for it. A loving savior. You know, that's really wonderful.

When you can take the sorrows and trials of life. And transmute them into glory for the Lord Jesus. You know, Jesus was always doing that.

Jesus could take the most horrific things. And beautify them. For instance, a crown of thorns.

Dear friend, there's nothing beautiful about a crown of thorns, is there? But I want to tell you, on the head of the Lord Jesus, they're beautiful. It's beautiful, isn't it? A cross. A cross.

A means of execution. But I tell you, it means a lot to us today. He has crowned that cross with glory.

Because on that cross, the Lord Jesus died for us. The Lord Jesus didn't fight the battle with carnal weapons, did he? He resorted to prayer and to the word of God. He repelled the enemy in the wilderness by quoting scriptures.

He could have called legions of angels down and quashed the devil. He could have obliterated him. He could have creamed him.

He didn't do it. He used the word of God. And I can never forget that before choosing the twelve disciples, he spent a night in prayer.

Wonderful, wonderful Lord Jesus. I think of the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus. And you and I can never reach that the way he could and did.

But it's good for us to think about it. And as we do think about it, it creates an appetite that we might be more like him. A thirst no earthly stream could satisfy.

A hunger that must feed on Christ or dine. I think that when we think of the Lord Jesus, one of the virtues that stands out most prominently is his moral perfection. Not only did he live without sinning, he lived without even knowing sin.

There was no sin in him. The Lord Jesus was tempted from without. He was never tempted from within the way you and I are.

Never tempted. There was nothing in him to respond to sin. I would urge you not to become involved in such useless questions as, could Jesus sin? It's not honoring to the Lord Jesus to even ask a question like that.

Why? He said, I always do those things that please the Father. Would that please the Father? He couldn't sin. He was so morally perfect.

Thou wouldst like wretched man become in everything but sin, that we as likely might become as we unlike had been. I love this about the Savior. He could do nothing in self-will.

That is really beautiful. I can't say that, and you can't say that. He could say it.

He could do nothing in self-will. He could not act independently of God the Father. And you know, this explains a couple of verses in John chapter 5 that might otherwise be rather difficult for people.

This chapter, incidentally, most of this chapter, the Lord Jesus is stressing his equality with God the Father. And in verse 19 of John chapter 5, he says, Most assuredly I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself. But what he sees the Father do, for whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner.

Look at that expression. The Son can do nothing of himself. You and I can't say that, because we can do a lot of things of ourselves, and we do a lot of things of ourselves that he couldn't.

He could only do those things that the Father gave him to do. And that's why every morning in life he woke up and his ear was open to receive the instructions of God the Father for that day. Also, in verse 30, he says, I can of my own self do nothing.

Of course, the cultists love these verses. They say he was just a man like ourselves. That's not what it's saying.

That's not what it's saying. I can do nothing of myself, as I hear I judge, and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own, but the will of the Father who sent me. That's why he couldn't do anything of himself, because he could only do the will of the Father who sent him.

In other words, in these two verses, he's not denying his omnipotence, but he's affirming his absolute equality with God the Father, and the perfect unity of his will with his Father. That speaks to me. Am I careful to seek the will of God in all that I do, or do I just launch out and do the things that I want to do? Who but the Lord Jesus could say, I always do those things that please him.

But you say, what has that to do with the rest of us? I mean, it's too late for us to begin on that pathway. Our nature and practice have ruled that out. But we can become more holy than we are.

We can seek to walk in conformity to the Father's will, and not our own. We have to get beyond the naive notion that we are able to plot our own lives. I often think of that when I speak to young people, and I say, what do you see in the years ahead? And all these grandiose plans emerge.

But is that my will, or is that the Father's will? I think sometimes we really do ourselves a great injustice by acting in such a way that we know more about it than God. When actually, we don't know. We don't know

the options that God might have for us, and he always wills the best for us.

The more we seek the will of God in all that we do and say, the more we come closer to the Savior's image. In his book, *The Sinless Savior*, J.B. Watson paid this glowing tribute to the Lord Jesus. Let me read it to you.

No pang of repentance was ever felt by him. He was never conscious of fault. No word did he ever need to recall.

Oh, that's wonderful, isn't it? He never said anything that he was sorry for afterwards. No word did he ever need to recall. Never was he ever aware at the day's end of anything he would like to undo.

Any deed that might have been better done. Any minute that might have been better spent. What a wonderful life.

I often think of that French skeptic, Renan. He said, it would take a Christ to invent a Christ. It would take a Christ to invent a Christ.

He never expresses regret for any word or act. Never admits mistake. Never utters any syllable of confession or suffers anyone to dictate his path or action.

He moves unhurried through every day. Every hour finding its appointed work fulfilled. So that in his life there were never any arrears.

Rather did each evening find him holding unspotted and unsoiled that peace with which he began the day. Another admirer of the Lord Jesus had said, he was as spotless as man as he was as God. Isn't that great? He was as spotless as man as he was as God.

As unsullied in the midst of the world's pollution as when daily the Father's delight before the world began. Robert Murray McShane was a man that we always think of when this subject comes up. He was a man who spent hours every day in holy communion with the Lord.

And when he went out from his room to visit in the parish where he was, people had an awareness of someone who was like Jesus. In fact, one person said of him, he was the most Christ-like man I ever knew. So as we think about these things, as our time comes to a close, I hope it will awake in your heart as it does in mine, a great ambition to be more like the Lord Jesus.

To put away those things that are so foreign to him in my life. To gaze upon him and be changed by beholding. Shall we pray? Lord Jesus, when we stand in your presence, we feel our own unworthiness so terribly.

Thank you for the grace that has saved us. Thank you for the grace that goes with us through life. For your patience with us, Lord.

And we would just change the message this morning into a prayer. And we would pray as that young man from Vancouver prayed. Lord, make us more like Christ and less like us.

We ask it in his worthy name. Amen.

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