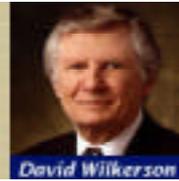




## TIMES SQUARE CHURCH PULPIT SERIES

SERMONS BY DAVID WILKERSON



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### A Manifestation of Jesus

By David Wilkerson  
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"We faint not, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:1-2). The apostle Paul states that we're called to be a manifestation of the truth. Of course, we know Jesus is this truth. So, what does Paul mean by saying, in essence, that we're to manifest Jesus?

Paul is speaking here of a visible expression. A manifestation is a "shining forth" that makes something clear and understandable. In short, Paul is saying we're called to make Jesus known and understood to all people. In each of our lives, there should be a shining forth of the very nature and likeness of Christ.

Paul takes this concept of manifesting Christ even further. He says we're actually God's letters to the world: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" the epistle of Christ "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (3:2-3). Our lives are letters written by the Holy Ghost and sent out to a lost world. And we're being read continually by those around us.

The fact is, God knew the wicked would not read or understand his written Word. The carnal mind simply can't comprehend spiritual things. It considers them foolish. So, instead, God has sent personal letters to an unconverted humankind. Yet these letters aren't written in ink or bound in leather. They're living, breathing, walking Scriptures. And they embody the gospel of Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

You see, the very reason God sent the Holy Ghost was to manifest Jesus to the world. The Spirit constantly speaks of Christ, making him clearly known to human understanding. He manifests Jesus in many ways. But God chose to make his Son known to sinners in a most effective way: by revealing him in flesh-and-blood epistles, living messages that can be read by everyone.

How, exactly, do we become God's letters to the world? It happens only by the work of the Spirit. At the moment we're saved, the Holy Ghost imprints in us the very image of Jesus. And he continues shaping this image in us, at all times. The Spirit's mission is to form in us an image of Christ that's so truthful and accurate, it will actually pierce people's consciences.

The Holy Ghost accomplishes this by taking hold of our redeemed hearts and surrendered bodies and continually drawing us into Jesus' presence. In our Lord's presence, we're being transformed. We're compelled to holy living, holy conversation, a holy lifestyle.

And as we spend more time with him, his image in us grows stronger. Finally, our lives become such a powerful manifestation of Jesus that those around us are touched and moved.

What an incredible word Paul has given us here. He's saying it's possible to become such shining lights of Christ that we literally impact people's consciences. "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 3:2). We're to become so like Jesus through the person of the Holy Spirit, so reflecting his purity, that others can't help being convicted. Christ's image in us strikes through every wall they've erected - every idol, sin and evil - and touches the conscience.

Now, Paul isn't speaking here of preaching or witnessing. He doesn't mention anything about passing out religious tracts or holding revival meetings. Of course, such evangelistic efforts are important. Yet, none of these tools can of themselves touch the seared consciences of wicked sinners. It's possible to use these things for evangelism, and yet still not produce a piercing manifestation of Christ.

Consider Jesus' words on the subject. He tells us it's possible to partake in miraculous manifestations that aren't true manifestations of himself: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

This proves that in Jesus' day the people saw great manifestations: men cast out demons, healed the sick, performed miracles. And crowds flocked to witness these things. Yet such manifestations didn't always touch the people's consciences. Why? Those who performed them didn't always have the likeness of Jesus. Therefore, they couldn't "commend themselves" to the crowds' deepest heart-needs. The manifestations these people brought weren't of Christ, but of fleshly signs and wonders.

You may ask, "Are you implying that God can't reach the consciences of the unsaved through preaching and evangelism?" Of course I'm not saying that. Our God can reach any person, through any means he chooses. But he does so on one condition: that the individuals who deliver his gospel live out a manifestation of truth. A person could be an eloquent speaker or the most biblically knowledgeable preacher on earth. But those things won't matter a whit if he doesn't have an intimate walk with Jesus. If Christ's presence hasn't changed us into his image, we're only a clanging cymbal.

All over this nation, Christians are praying for revival. Many expect the Holy Ghost to fall upon their community and convert multitudes. They want to see God sweep sinners into their churches and fill the seats. But this kind of prayer can be a cop-out. Often, when revival doesn't come, the people claim, "It's not our fault. We fasted and prayed. We canvassed the area with invitations. But God didn't see fit to send revival. It's his problem, not ours. They put the responsibility completely on the Lord.

I believe God responds, "Oh no, I won't play that game. You'll take

personal responsibility for your witness of me. I want every member of my body to be a shining manifestation of my Son. You're responsible for how you make me known, to your families, friends, neighbors and coworkers."

Simply put, revival begins when those around you see Jesus in you. And that's exactly what God is looking for. You can spend hours praying for an awakening in the church. But all the while, you can let your daily thoughts, walk and conversation betray you. If you fail to fully manifest Jesus, everything else is in vain.

### **How do you manifest Jesus so that the consciences of the unsaved are touched?**

How can we shine forth ever brighter to become a manifestation of truth? How can our lives become such clear images of Jesus that we produce in others a conviction and hunger for God?

We find the key in Ezekiel 44. As Ezekiel looks prophetically into the last days, he sees two kinds of priesthods existing in the church. One is the righteous Zadok priesthood. Zadok was a godly minister who served Israel during David's reign. And he remained faithful to David in both good times and bad. Zadok's upright life was a righteous example to all the other priests. I have been preaching about the Zadok priesthood for nearly twenty years.

The other priesthood Ezekiel sees in the last days is the Eli priesthood. Eli was an unfaithful priest who allowed corruption to enter God's house. He was disobedient to God's Word, soft on sin, lazy about holiness. And the ministry under him was corrupted by sensuality and love for the world. These priests' lifestyles caused the wicked to abhor the things of God and mock true worship. The Lord called this corrupt priesthood "Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray after their idols" (Ezekiel 44:10).

This Eli priesthood represents compromised Christians in these last days. They have no power to touch the consciences of people. And their lifestyles cause the wicked to turn away from the Lord: "They caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity" (44:12). These flesh-driven believers go to church and claim to be followers of Christ. They even believe they're part of a holy priesthood. But their conversation and loose living are despicable in God's sight.

Such people are unclean manifestations of who Jesus is. Sinners say of them, "That person calls himself a Christian. But every time I'm around him, he's telling dirty stories. He always wants to talk about the filthy, violent movies he's seen. How can he truly be a Christian? He's nothing like Jesus."

Keep in mind, Jesus calls us "kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Revelation 1:6). And the apostle Peter reminds us, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. Ye also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9, 5). I ask you, which priesthood describes your life: the godly Zadok priesthood, or the corrupt Eli priesthood? These two ministries represent two kinds of manifestations. And they represent Jesus to the world in two very different ways.

Paul warned of two different gospels: Christ's gospel and "another gospel." He said that those who manifest this "other" gospel have been bewitched. Somewhere along the way, they turned aside from the truth. Perhaps they clung to an idol or held onto a secret sin. And now their compromised lives cause people to reject their testimony.

### **A halfhearted manifestation of Jesus in the home produces a passive heart in the children.**

It's sad but true: many Christian parents are sending their kids straight to hell. Dad is to be the priest in the home. And Mother is a member of God's royal priesthood too. So, which of these two priesthods are you manifesting: Zadok's or Eli's?

For years I was a youth evangelist, traveling the nation and ministering to thousands of young people. During that time, I had conversations with many troubled teenagers from Christian homes. These kids were completely turned off to church. They wanted nothing to do with their parents' religion. They spoke of their dad and mom's angry fights, blatant hypocrisy, awful gossip, secret sins. They heard constant grumbling and complaints about their minister, church members, family friends.

Usually in such cases, the dad was active in church. People saw him as dedicated and full of Jesus. But his kids knew how to read his life, and they saw him as he really was: a phony. He mistreated their mother with abusive language. Or he had a secret stash of pornographic magazines. Or he was caught watching filthy videos.

Such a dad serves in the Eli priesthood. He has no spiritual authority. And in turn, he has no respect. He might lecture his kids, or threaten them, or try to demand obedience. But he's wasting his breath. It's all to no avail.

We see this illustrated in Eli's life. Eli had two sons named Hophni and Phinehas, who also served as priests. God called these men "sons of Belial," or children of the devil. They had the audacity to fornicate with women at the door of the temple. They even brought prostitutes into God's house. Yet Eli never dealt with his sons about their sin. He never spoke to them more than an empty word of caution. After all, he knew anything he might say to them was in vain, because of his own spiritual sloth.

Today, more Christian young people than ever are alcoholics. Some parents have brought their teens to me seeking help. All too often, when I talk privately with these kids, they laugh at their parents' concern over their drinking. "My dad and mom always had a stash of wine," they say. "They would drink and then pray. My folks exposed me to this stuff. I didn't start drinking through peer pressure. I became an alcoholic at home." Others tell me, "My dad's always on my back about smoking pot. But he drinks all the time. That's just liquid pot."

Even more tragically, I see in these kids a passivity toward Jesus. When the Spirit moves during church services, they sit unmoved. The sermon may be convicting, but the young people remain untouched. I have to wonder: what hardened them? How did they become so disinterested in the things of God? They're not deeply corrupted kids or God-haters. In fact, many are kindhearted and giving. But, sadly, their lives are complete spiritual blanks. I can only conclude they haven't seen a true manifestation of Jesus at home.

### **The Eli priesthood ministers to people "before their idols" (Ezekiel 44:12).**

Ezekiel tells us the priests in Eli's ministry allowed pollution into God's house (see Ezekiel 44:7). "Strangers, uncircumcised in heart," brought abominable idols into the sanctuary. And the priests "ministered unto (the people) before their idols" (44:12). This means the pastors approved of the people's idolatry. These priests actually

put God's people at ease about their sin.

This issue of "ministering before idols" should hit home with every Christian. You see, our homes are meant to be holy sanctuaries, where the Lord is exalted. And no idol or abomination should be allowed in them: "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing" (Deuteronomy 7:26).

This is the passage God directed me to deal with when he commanded me to get rid of our family's TV set years ago. The Holy Spirit revealed that if I wanted to experience Christ's fullness and continue speaking prophetically, I had to break that idol. After all, I couldn't even minister to my own family if I clung to anything abominable. That's when I realized TV would become a powerful weapon of the enemy. Satan would use it to dim the light of God's Spirit in the hearts and minds of multitudes of Christians.

Of course, this was back when television was mild by today's standards. The most popular shows were "I Love Lucy," "The Honey-mooners" and "The Andy Griffith Show." The word "sex" couldn't even be mentioned. TV watchers at that time couldn't begin to imagine the content of today's programs: blatant nudity, bloody violence, in-your-face sex, the glorification of adultery and homosexuality, the mockery of evangelicals.

Now I want to raise an equally important issue: is your child's bedroom a den of iniquity? Are his shelves full of sensual rap CDs and videos? Do you know what kind of music he's downloading on his computer? Are you sure he's not surfing pornographic web sites, or even conversing with perverted adults in chat rooms?

Maybe your child is watching X-rated filth on cable TV, in your own living room. You tell yourself, "We subscribe to cable only for CNN News and the Discovery Channel." But if you're not policing what your kids take in, you're not manifesting Christ to them. A recent report from a government agency suggests that parents bring their child's computer into the living room. This would lower his chance of being contacted by a pedophile. This wasn't some preacher's advice, but the government's.

Don't mistake me here: the issue isn't to retreat from society. In fact, it's just the opposite: to be a manifestation of the truth of Jesus, in every area of life. Our God wants to make us living, breathing Bibles to the world. So how can we sit in movie theaters and drink in shows that glorify violence, a sin God hates? How can we endure blatant curses of our savior's name? How can we sit passively by as sensual, seductive images are paraded before our eyes? How could any Christian believe he'll emerge from the seat of the scornful with a clean heart, shining forth a manifestation of Christ?

This isn't legalism. It's manifesting Christ. And it's avoiding becoming an Eli, who was soft on sin. God said of this priesthood, "They shall not come near to me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place" (Ezekiel 44:13).

### **Ezekiel prophesied of a Zadok priesthood in these last days.**

"The priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall keep my charge" (Ezekiel 44:15-

16). God is saying, in essence, "In the last days, I'll have a Zadok ministry, made up of servants after my own heart. And unlike the Eli priesthood, they'll come near to me and minister to me."

Paul writes, "Seeing as we have this ministry [of manifesting Christ] (we) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth" (2 Corinthians 4:1-2). Paul says manifesting Christ involves renouncing all hidden dishonesty and secret sin. In short, these things reflect Ezekiel's prophecy: God's Zadok ministers will reject the ways of Eli, renounce all idols, turn to God with renewed passion, become increasingly separated to the Lord, and determine to reflect his glory.

You may wonder: where do Zadok priests find the power to do these things? How do they summon the ability to rid their lives completely of abominations, while Eli priests drink freely from such poison? What must happen to these true servants, to cause them to cleave to Jesus amid such compromise?

Simply put, Zadok priests are changed and empowered by being shut in with Christ. They spend quality time in his presence. As a result, they've found their calling: to draw near to Jesus, and to minister to him in his presence. How do they minister to the Lord? The word Ezekiel uses for minister is *sharath* (see Ezekiel 44:15-16). It means to wait on or serve, and to worship. In short, it speaks of jealous devotion.

I read of such devotion in the New York Times recently. A reporter was sent to a new Hindu temple in Pomona, New York. The temple was built for the god Vishnu, which is worshipped by many Asian immigrants. The reporter described seeing a Hindu priest minister to this god. First, the priest entered the inner sanctum, or holy place. Then he knelt for hours before a granite image of Vishnu. The god is reclining in the coils of a five-headed cobra, where it's sheltered by the serpents' hoods. The reporter wrote, "The priest came out of that holy place hours later, drained and blissful, like a victorious warrior. He was covered with sweat, and he carried a wilted garland of flowers under his arm."

I often wonder if God gets jealous over this kind of devotion. While priests in other religions minister to lifeless idols, multitudes of God's people are preoccupied with the things of this world. We give him only scraps of our time, in our hurried, leftover moments.

### **The sons of Zadok come to God's table to minister to him.**

"They shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 44:15). Note two things Ezekiel mentions here: the fat and the blood.

1. The "fat" represents the best part of an offering. It refers to the animal sacrifice made by the priests: "The priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the Lord's. It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood" (Leviticus 3:16-17). The fat was considered the choicest part of the sacrificial animal. God was telling his people, "I want you to bring to me the best you have to offer."

Today our sacrificial offering is our worship and devotion to the Lord. And God tells us, just as he told Israel, "I want the best of

your life. I don't want you to give me only your tired, weary hours. I want your worship and service when your mind and body are at their best. I want the best of everything you have to offer."

In short, we minister to the Lord every time we put him first. We're serving him whenever we walk away from activities, desires and concerns to be with him - whenever we halt everything important and steal away to adore him - whenever we push aside every thought and think of him alone. This is bringing him the "fat," the best part of us. The Bible even calls this fat the "bread of God." In other words, we're feeding the Lord whenever we make him more important than all else.

2. The "blood" Ezekiel speaks of represents a life that's yielded to God. It means unreserved consecration, the yielding of our whole lives. In essence, we minister to the Lord every time we rely on the power of Christ's blood. And we're to do so in every situation and crisis. You see, applying Jesus' blood isn't just a one-time experience. It's a daily need. We're to call on the power of his blood every time we need healing, peace of mind, cleansing from sin. In each circumstance, we're to stand firmly on the promises God made to us through the shed blood of his Son. We're to stand on its claims, cleansed, redeemed and unshakable.

The Lord calls these offerings of fat and blood "a sweet savour" (Leviticus 3:16), meaning, a sweet taste to his lips. The Lord tastes this sweet savor whenever we give Jesus the "fat" and "blood" of our lives: yielding our bodies as living sacrifices, and relying on Christ's blood as our victory. We're actually feeding God something sweet to his taste.

Only as we do these things will we manifest Jesus fully. And only then will our lives be filled with Holy Ghost power, touching the consciences of everyone around us.

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