

Are You Religious or Righteous? – November 22, 2009 Sunday AM

Lesson Objective – To teach what it really means to be in Christ. Religious acts mean nothing in the eyes of God if we are not first of all righteous. The only way to be righteous is to be found in Christ, to have our sins paid for with His blood and strive everyday to walk in the light.

Key passage – Colossians 2:8-14 – 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and *you are complete in Him*, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in *the working of God*, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. NKJV

Introduction

I've seen a couple of signs recently that really caught my eye. "Given up on church?" "Church for people who don't like church". There is great confusion about what the church is and what the church does. People see no distinction being religious and being righteous.

I. What and why do we worship?

A. God desires that we worship Him

1. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well
2. John 4:21-24 - Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
3. He desires that no one be lost
4. John 12:32 - And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.

B. Buy not all worship is acceptable to Him

1. Proverbs 15:8 - The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight.
2. Matthew 15:3-9 - He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, '*Honor your father and your mother*'; and, '*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.*' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* a gift to God"— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: '*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*'"
3. There is indeed worship based on commandments of men that is vain and rejected by God

II. Most People Consider Themselves to be Religious

- A. It's true! Most people believe they will go to heaven when they die
1. Their hope is fostered by the comforting words of many preachers, priests, and rabbis
 2. Their hope is based upon the idea that heaven is for all *believers*, or for those whose good works outweigh the bad
 3. When someone passes away, how often have you heard "He was such a religious person" or "She didn't go to church much but she was such a good person"?
- B. Those statements may be true but are those hopes well-founded?
1. Will most people go to heaven when they die if they are religious?
 2. Is salvation based upon good works? Is it based upon faith only?
- C. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus gave some ominous warnings...
1. Few, not many, would be saved
 2. Matthew 7:13-14 - Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and ***there are few who find it.***
 3. Many religious people, including some believers in Jesus, will learn that they too will be lost!
 4. Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '***I never knew you***; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"
- D. There are some who teach that as long as one believes in Jesus, they will be saved
1. That kind of salvation is by "faith only" even though the only time the phrase "faith only" is found in the Bible, it says: You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by ***faith only***. – James 2:24
 2. There is such a thing as "an unsaved believer" ...
 - a. The demons believe, but are not saved - James 2:19
 - b. There were people who believed in Jesus, but were not saved - John 12:42-43
 3. Jesus described a true disciple as one who not only believes in Him, but does what He says.
 4. John 8:30-32- As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 5. John 14:15, 23-24 – 15 If you love Me, keep My commandments. 23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.
 6. ***Let no one think that just because they "believe" in Jesus, they have a free ticket into heaven or salvation in Jesus Christ!***
- D. There are some who teach that as long as one lives a good life, they will be saved
1. Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '***I never knew you***; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"
 2. Here were people who not only believed in Jesus, but believed they had:
 - a. Prophesied in His name!
 - b. Cast out demons in His Name!
 - c. Done many wonders in His Name!
 - d. They thought they had been empowered to do many wonderful works!

3. Good works certainly does not earn our way into heaven
 4. Ephesians 2:8-10 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
 5. Indeed, salvation is by grace, not by works - Titus 3:3-7
 6. Good works had not saved Cornelius, he still needed to be told what to do to be saved - Acts 10:1-5; 11:14
- E. We might indeed be very religious, and do many things in the name of Jesus, yet He might still say: "I never knew you; depart from Me..."

III. Who then will be saved? Who will be considered righteous?

- A. Only those who do our heavenly Father's will and have been made righteous by the blood of Jesus will be saved.
1. As we have seen what Jesus said, "...he who does the will of My Father in heaven" - Matthew 7:21
 - a. Here is the dividing line: those who **DO** the Father's will!
 - b. As James said in James 1:22-25, it is the "doer of the work" who is blessed in what he does
 2. Is this legalism?
 - a. No! Legalism is salvation by perfect law-keeping, believing that one earns salvation by the merit of what they have done
 3. Salvation by grace does not remove the necessity of obedience; rather, it actually **demand**s it! We simply need to recognize that our obedience does not earn or merit salvation.
- B. When all is said and done, we are still undeserving of salvation!
1. Luke 17:10 - So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'
 2. Isaiah 64:6 - But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.
 3. Romans 3:10-12 - As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."
 4. We cannot earn salvation. The Father's will, while it offers salvation by grace, **does require obedience!**
 - a. Those who obey from the heart will be delivered from sin - Romans 6:17-18
 - b. Christ is the author of salvation to all who obey Him - Hebrews 5:9
 - c. Christ will come in judgment against those who obey not the gospel – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9
- C. How are then found to be righteous before God?
1. Romans 3:21-26 - But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate **His** righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

2. The blood of Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, it satisfies the debt of our sins and redeems us from death.
 3. Ephesians 2:11-13 - Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- D. How do we get into the blood and be found righteous? What is the Father's will?
- E. It begins with...
1. Hearing the word, faith comes from hearing Romans 10:17
 2. Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ - Acts 20:21
 3. Confessing Jesus as Lord - Romans 10:10
 4. Being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins - Acts 2:38
 5. Strive to live a life of faithful service to Christ, confessing our sins along the way – 1 John 1:9
- F. To be found Righteous...
1. Colossians 1:13-14 - He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
 2. Philippians 3:8-11 - Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, ***that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ,*** the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
 3. Galatians 3:26-27 - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ***For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.***
 4. Romans 6:1-7 - What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ***Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Conclusion

We should strive and seek to be righteous before God, not religious. There is a great distinction between being religious and being righteous. We cannot earn heaven by doing religious works. Our righteousness is found ***ONLY*** in Christ, no where else. If we love Him, we will obey Him, belief alone will be enough. If we want to be righteous before God, we must be found ***in*** Christ, we have no righteousness of our own. We must have our sins paid for and have them covered by the blood of Jesus. The ***ONLY*** way to do that is to be a part of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus through baptism into Christ.

Are you Religious or are you Righteous?

Invitation