

The Chains are Broken series

Part 2: Freedom from Religiosity

Key verse = Galatians 3:11-13

11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

Q. What do you think True Christianity is?

Q. How can we determine if we are truly following Jesus?

Jesus was more against religiosity among the flock than he was against immorality among the heathen. Just read Matthew 23 if you think that is overstating things! Remember he said to the woman caught in adultery "Go and sin no more." Which is a lot different in tone to the "Woe to you Pharisees".

Paul gives a description of the chains of religiosity when he describes certain people as "having a form of godliness but denying its power." 2 Tim 3:5

Religiosity is;

- 1. Doing church out of the power of the sinful nature/ flesh**
- 2. Failing to delight in Christ and drawing from Him for life each day**
- 3. Being content with the shell/ husk of godliness but neglecting the pursuit of true power that brings life change.**

Illustration;

When you crack an almond nut out of its shell do you enjoy the broken shell or the delicious kernel?

Crunching on the external shell is equivalent to how religion functions.

- Both are hard, sharp and of no value
- They fail to fill us with life and power

What keeps us crunching shells and neglecting the inner kernel?

1. Deception

Q. Do you think crunching on the shell and neglecting the kernel is a strange practice?

Q. How does it relate to how to live as Christians and be the church?

Satan's greatest fear is that the church will truly understand that our life is in Christ through his Spirit by faith. It is not per se in doing right things (the Law) or reading lots of the bible or refining your theology or even teaching kids at Sunday School.

2. A Deep Rooted Pride

James 4: 6 says;

"God resists/ opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. "

Q. What would it be like realising that Almighty God is actively opposing you?

Religion believes we can actually do this Christian stuff if we try hard enough.

This is pride and will kill us. Our starting point for change always has to be I have no hope of _____ (insert area of need eg Being a good husband etc...) yet Christ can do all things. So I die to myself and seek his life by faith in me.

3. We are too comfortable with our sin

If we want to keep our various sins and also be seen as "churchy" people then we have to enter into a "trade off". Of course we can chuck all this Christian stuff in which is another option (many people seeking to be authentic have done this). In order to be seen as a good Christian though yet continue to have my fits of rage or watch dodgy tv programmes I will have to munch on the husk and shell of true Christianity and pretend that I am doing well.

Read Ezekiel 36:32

Q. How does this relate to the above?

What do the ropes/chains of religiosity look like?

1. Focussing on the minutiae

Matthew 23:23- 24

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

We focus on the trifles because we have no hope of ever really doing the heart stuff God requires.

Q. Why did Jesus use this illustration of the gnat and the camel?

The Camel represents the big heart matters while the gnat symbolises the things we can do that are good but can be done without God's strength.

Q. Think up some Camels and some gnats and discuss them

2. Developing a critical spirit

When we are shell eaters we are not enjoying life. We have cut ourselves off from the delight of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We sense God's critical eye on us so we have the same attitude toward others.

Focussing on the sin of others and being intent on "developing a more holy church" through criticism becomes a way of deflecting the glare of the light of Christ away from ourselves.

Q. Who wins when we have a critical spirit?

Q. Why do we take pride in such an approach?

3. Lack of miracles: Prayer is rarely answered

Galatians 3:5

⁵So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

Miracles and the display of the power of God occurs through faith, not obedience to the Law.

God loves to do the things that others believe are impossible! He gives a baby to an elderly woman and tells Mary she will have a child though still a virgin.

A religious person relies on the law to give life instead of having faith in the life of Christ through his Spirit.

Conclusion

Q. Do you pass the test? A person munching on the outer shell instead of feeding daily on Christ finds Christianity a terrible burden. It is hard, sharp and of no value.

Confess your religiosity

Jesus came to set you free.

Look only to Jesus for your life, not the law.

Then you can obey him with all your heart.

Philippians 2:13

¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.