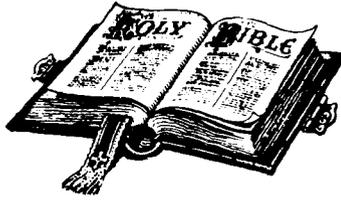


THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

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IS IT LEGALISM?

As Lot and his family were brought forth out of Sodom they were told, **"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee. . ."** (Gen. 19:17). Lot's wife did not follow this command in the strict sense, for she looked back. God turned her into a pillar of salt. Had she strictly conformed to God's command, that might have made her a "Legalist," but who wants to be a nasty "Legalist" when he can be a pillar of salt?

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, offered fire before the Lord which he had not commanded. (Lev. 10). The liberal view is that details do not matter. They may have reasoned that fire is fire, so what difference does it make? Well, God sent fire which devoured them both and they died. If they had been "legalist" enough to do only what God commanded they would have lived, but they chose fiery death to that terrible thing called "Legalism."

At Kadesh, Moses was told to speak to the rock and it would give water. (Num. 20:8) As if in opposition to the idea of strict conformity to divine law, Moses took the liberty to smite the rock twice and to say, **"Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water**

out of this rock?" He got the water without being a Legalist", but he missed the land of Canaan. (Numbers 27:12-14). But who wants the Promised Land if he must be a "Legalist"?

If strict conformity to law makes one a "Legalist", and "Legalism" is as terrible as many preachers describe it, why not hail Lot's wife for her practice of individual liberty and think of the pillar of salt as a memorial of freedom? Why not praise Nadab and Abihu for their broad-mindedness and view them as martyrs for the cause of freedom to worship as we please? Why not exalt Moses as one who denied himself the blessings of Canaan rather than be guilty of strict conformity?

Is strict conformity to God's word "Legalism"? . . . Or is it just plain obedience?

Is this opposition to strict conformity to divine law anything other than opposition to doing exactly what God teaches? What is "Liberalism" but "Infidelity" in disguise?

—Irvin Himmel in
APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE, March, 1962

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Editorial . . .

RELIGIOUS, BUT LOST (No. 2)

In our study last month we considered four people (or groups of people) that were **religious but lost**. They were:

1. **THOSE MENTIONED BY JESUS CHRIST IN MATTHEW 7:21-23**. They claimed to have prophesied, cast out demons and done many wonderful works in the name of the Lord, but they were **lost!**

2. **THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES IN MATTHEW 23**. They sat "**in Moses' seat**," prayed, paid tithes, were very zealous in proselyting, appeared "**beautiful and righteous outwardly**," etc., but they were **lost!**

3. **THE PHARISEE IN LUKE 18:9-14**. If he was truthful, he was very religious, but he was **lost!**

4. **WORSHIPPERS OF BAAL**. (1 Kings 16:30-31; 18:17-40). Although Ahab and other Israelites were religious they were guilty of idolatry and thus they were **lost!**

To many people, the mere fact that a person is religious indicates he is saved. However, such is not the case. Let us consider some more examples in the word of God of people who were **religious, but lost!**

5. **THE ATHENIANS**. (See Acts 17:16-23, 32). We learn from the reading

of Acts 17:16 that the city of Athens was "**wholly given to idolatry**." Some of them "**encountered**" Paul and called him a "**babbling**." Paul said: "**Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious**." (ASV). Along with their idolatry, the Athenians were worshipping the true God in **ignorance**. Some of them mocked when they heard of the resurrection of the dead.

Obviously, the Athenians were **religious, but lost!**

6. **THE EPHESIANS IN ACTS 19:21-41**. These Ephesians had **gods "made with hands"** (v. 26) Their religion called for the making of "**silver shrines for Diana**" (v. 24). Demetrius, a silversmith, recognized "**Diana**" as "**the great goddess**" (v. 27). The goddess "**Diana**" had a "**temple**" (v. 27). Speaking of "**Diana**," Demetrius said, "**Whom all Asia and the world worshippeth**" (v. 27). While Paul was in Ephesus, "**all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians**" (v. 34.) The town clerk said: "**Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?**" (v. 35).

From the information in Acts 19 we understand that the Ephesians were indeed **religious**. In fact, they were worshipping an idol — the goddess Diana. They were **not** following Jesus Christ. They were **not** worshipping the true God of heaven.

Many of the Ephesians "**believed**," came and "**confessed**" and "**showed their deeds**" (v. 18). Many of them who "**used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men**" (v. 19). "**So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed**." (v. 20).

Later Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus and declared that they had been saved by grace through faith. (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Prior to their being saved

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they were **lost!** The fact that they may have been religious before they were saved by grace through faith does not prove that they were not **lost before** they had faith. They were **religious but lost!** (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8). It matters not how **religious** idolaters are the act remains that **they are lost!**

7. THE EUNUCH OF ETHIOPIA IN ACTS 8:25-39. An examination of this passage will reveal that the eunuch was **religious, but lost!** Note the following facts.

(1) He had been to Jerusalem from Ethiopia to worship (v. 27).

(2) He read the Scriptures (v. 28, 32-33).

(3) He did **not** know of whom Isaiah was prophesying until Phillip "began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus" (v. 34-35)

(4) He believed in Jesus (after hearing Jesus preached) and was baptized in water (v. 35-39). NOTE: Jesus said: "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**" (Mark 16:16). OBSERVATION: Before faith in Jesus Christ and baptism in water the eunuch was lost.

Although the eunuch was a man of great authority (having charge of all the treasures of the queen of Ethiopia) and obviously a very religious man, he was in a **lost** condition.

The fact that a person has great authority and is very religious does **not** mean that he is in a saved condition. Every person such as the eunuch is lost and must have faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized in water in order to be saved. (See Mark 16:15-16; John 20:30-31; Acts 2:38).

8. SAUL OF TARSUS. (See Acts 9, 22, 26; Phil. 3:4-6). A study of these passages will reveal the following traits that characterized Saul.

(1) After the most straitest sect of the Jews' religion Saul lived a Pharisee. (See Acts 26:5).

(2) Saul was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers and was **zealous** toward God. (See Acts 22:3).

(3) Concerning the righteousness which was in the law He was blameless (Phil. 3:6).

(4) He verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and he did them! (Acts 26:9-10).

(5) He lived in all good conscience (See Acts 23:1).

The above mentioned facts prove that Saul was sincere as well as religious.

The following facts should prove to every "honest and good heart" that Saul was in a **lost** condition.

(1) Saul breathed out "**threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.**" (Acts 9:1).

(2) He "**persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women.**" (Acts 22:4, also see Acts 22:19).

(3) When Stephen was killed, Saul stood by and consented unto his death and kept the raiment of those who killed him. (See Acts 22:20).

(4) He persecuted Jesus. (See Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8).

(5) He had sins that needed to be washed away. (See Acts 22:16).

Although Saul had many good traits, was sincere as well as **religious** and had a good conscience, **he was lost!** He needed **faith** in Jesus Christ. He developed that faith. He needed to "**wash away**" his sins. (cf. Acts 22:16).

Saul, although a **religious man, was lost** in sin and thus needed the benefits of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The fact that Saul, as a Hebrew, had faith in God did **not** prove that he was saved. Neither does the fact that a person has "faith in God" today **prove** that he is saved.

9. CORNELIUS IN ACTS 10 and 11. A consideration of these two chapters will reveal the fact that Cornelius was **religious, but lost!** Here are some traits of Cornelius which indicate he was religious and sincere.

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- (1) He was a devout man (10:2).
- (2) He feared God with all his house (10:2).
- (3) He gave much alms to the people (10:2).
- (4) He prayed to God always (10:2).
- (5) He was a just man (10:22).
- (6) He was of good report among the Jews (10:22).
- (7) He fasted (10:30).

Although Cornelius was **religious**, he was **lost** because he was instructed by an angel of God to send men to Joppa and call for Simon Peter who would tell him ‘**words whereby**’ he and ‘**all his house**’ would ‘**be saved.**’ (Cf. Acts 11:13-14)

Without a doubt, a person may be devout, fear God with all his house, help people, be just, fast, pray and have a good report and still be **lost**! What about you? Are you religious? Are you saved or lost? Do you have concrete evidence from God’s word that you are saved? To be saved you must hear the gospel, believe it, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as did Cornelius.

10. LYDIA IN ACTS 16:14-15. A reading of this passage indicates that

Lydia was religious. The text says she ‘**worshipped God.**’ The implication is that she was **lost** because ‘**she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.**’ The text also reveals the fact that ‘**she was baptized.**’ Jesus had said: ‘**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.**’ (Mark 16:16). Remember that the apostle Peter said: ‘**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**’ (Acts 2:38).

Although a person is religious he needs ‘to attend’ unto the things of God and be baptized that he might be saved.

Being religious is no assurance that one is saved. Surely one **must be religious in order to go to heaven, but one must be religiously right!**

You should give diligence to make sure that your religion is **right**. To be right, it must be according to **truth** as revealed in God’s Word!

Yes, a person may be **religious, but lost!**

(CRS)

(To be continued)

— SENTENCE SERMONS —

One who does not respect the person he faces in the mirror, will not respect others.

* * * * *

Gentleness is strong and real strength is gentle.

* * * * *

A clear conscience is a good tranquilizer.

* * * * *

Faithfulness to God is true success.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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