

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

May 30, 2021

A Religion That Works

Reportedly, a new man in a certain town drove around one Sunday morning trying to decide which church to "join." Finally, he decided to join the church which met at the place where he saw the most Cadillacs parked. His reason? "Those people have a religion that works!"

The reasoning reflected in the above story, though it sounds "far fetched," makes as much sense as some of the actual reasons I have heard as to why various people "joined" different churches. And it is in keeping with the theology of those who currently preach today's health and wealth gospel. Judging from the message often proclaimed by those who are caught up in modern "prime time religion," one could conclude that God is as interested in the health of a person's body, and the condition of his wallet, as he is in the salvation of his **soul!** Hence, why not "join the church" where the most Cadillacs are parked?

Hopefully, however, those who read this bulletin are well aware of the greater value of the soul (cf. Matt. 16:26). The fact is, many of our Lord's most ardent followers suffered physical affliction (2 Cor. 12:7-10; I Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20), and "*took joyfully the spoiling*" of their goods (Heb. 10:34). Jesus invited all to "*come unto*" Him (Matt. 11:28-30), but He pulled no punches. He let them know that in order to some day wear the **crown** they must bear the **cross** (Matt. 10:32-38; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

But getting back to the man who "joined the church" where he saw the most Cadillacs parked. Notwithstanding his lack of information concerning what to look for, he was impressed with a people who had "a religion that works!" And God is too! Note, for example, the classic declaration of faith and works recorded in James 2:14-26. Inspiration was quite explicit in stating that "*faith, if it hath **not** works, is **dead** being alone*" (Jas. 2:17). Our Lord strongly condemned those who "*say, and do not*" (Matt. 23:1). Going to heaven involves **doing** the will of our "*Father which is in heaven,*" not merely saying "*Lord, Lord*" (Matt. 7:21; cf. Luke 6:46). It is not enough to simply "*love in word*" and "*in tongue,*" rather we must love "**in deed and in truth**" (I John 3:18). In sum and substance, we must have "a religion that works."

The purpose of this article is to encourage each reader thereof to take a personal inventory as to the nature of his (or her) religion. The question is not "are you religious?" You **are** religious! Otherwise you would not bother to even read this bulletin. So the question is this: "do you have a religion that works?" Instead of generalizing, let us deal in specifics:

1. Does your religion motivate you to **worship**, both regularly and Scripturally (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42; John 4:24).

2. Does your religion cause you to **pray** effectually, fervently, scripturally, and “*without ceasing*” (Jas 5:16; I John 5:14; I Thess. 5:17)?

3. Does your religion prompt you to **study** the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15), and to meditate therein both day and night (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:1-2; 119:15; I Tim. 4:15)?

4. Does your religion affect our **daily life**, causing you to present your body as a “*living sacrifice*” unto God (Rom. 12:2), resulting in your living “*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Tit. 2:14)?

5. Does your religion take you from your house and to the **homes** of others in a loving attempt to **share** the gospel of Jesus Christ with them (2 Cor. 5:14; 2 Tim. 2:2)?

6. Does your religion **benefit your fellow man**, enlarging your concept both with regards to the identity of your neighbor, as well as your response to his needs (Luke 10:25-37)?

7. Does your religion affect your **relationship** with other Christians, causing you to be meek, longsuffering, forbearing, and loving (Eph. 4:2)?

8. Does your religion cause you to be a **submissive** wife (Eph. 5:22), or a **loving husband** (Eph. 5:25), or an **obedient** child (Eph. 6:1)?

9. Does your religion affect your **speech** (Eph. 4:29), your **dress**(I Tim. 2:9,10), or your **influence** upon others (Matt. 5:13-16)?

10. Does your religion affect your **work** habits (2 Thess. 3:10), your **attitude** toward God and men (Matt. 22:35-40), toward things (Luke 12:16-21, toward time (Eph. 5:16), or life itself (Jas. 4:13-14).

Conclusion:

When all is said and done, most people are not really impressed with what we drive, or where we live. But they are impressed with people who have a religion that works. And so is Jesus (Matt. 25:35-40)! Friend, do you have a **working** religion? Or are you merely religious?

*** -B. Witherington