

Transformed!

How God Renews the Lives of His People

Get Personal

Part 3: *Why Religion Doesn't Help*

A Note from Pastor Keith...

Today's passage begins, "if you call yourself a Jew," so you might be tempted to say, "That leaves me out." But wait! Paul is not addressing the Jews on the basis of their *ethnicity*, but on the basis of their *religiosity*. So actually his remarks would apply to all of us who consider ourselves "religious." Today we will confront the difference between "religion" as most people understand it and the transforming power that God provides.

Why Religion Doesn't Help

Focus Passage:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:20 (all references are NIV)

Religion is NOT Transformation.

1. Religion is about how much we *know*.

Transformation is about how we *live!*

²¹you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples [commit sacrilege]? ²³You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Romans 2:17-24

Making a show of our religious knowledge won't impress God or anyone else. All it really does is highlight our hypocrisy and invite others to mock God right along with us.

2. Religion is about *looking* spiritual.

Transformation is about *being* spiritual!

²⁵Circumcision [think **religious ritual**] has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

Romans 2:25-26

Spiritual rituals and symbols have their place, but how are we actually using them: as external expressions of inner realities, or as shortcuts to spiritual respectability?

Get Personal!

When you think about where you are spiritually—about how you're doing in your relationship with God—what do you consider? What do you look at or measure to determine how you're doing and whether you're growing?

Do you consider knowledge of spiritual truth important? In what way?

Do spiritual practices, ceremonies or rituals play a role in your life? If so, what do they contribute?

Yet **Biblical** religion does **3** Things that are *indispensable* to spiritual transformation:

1. It provides us with God's Truth.

^{3:1}What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ²Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. ³What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

Romans 3:1-4

2. It alerts us to Our Spiritual Condition.

⁹What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. ¹³Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. ¹⁴Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. ¹⁵Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know. ¹⁸There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 3:9-18

3. It warns us that We Cannot Trust Ourselves.

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:19-20

We can be religious without being transformed. But ***biblical religion is absolutely indispensable to spiritual transformation!*** Among many other things, it teaches us who God is, who we are, and where exactly the problem between us lies.

What is God's Word telling *you*?

Get Personal!

What advantage is there in having God's Word right in our hands in written form? What are you doing to get the full benefit of that?

These Old Testament quotes (vv. 10-18) paint a bleak picture. In what way, from what spiritual perspective, is the picture accurate?

Obviously we need help! What is Paul telling us NOT to depend on? What does he mean?

What are you trusting is the solution to your sin problem?

Conclusion

Q: Why doesn't religion alone transform us?

A: *Because religion can be external, while the problem is internal.*

Next Week: *What God Did to Transform Your Life*