

# From Religion To Relationships

In Romans 10:1-3, Paul revealed the burden of his heart - "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. **For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God**". At this time, Israel had reached an admirable height in religion but were lacking in relationship with God based on righteousness. **They were very passionate about their religion but they were passionately wrong!**

At creation (Genesis 1-3), God established relationships with mankind, and by this illustrated that true worship, whether carried out individually or in groups, is primarily a matter of personal relationships and regular fellowship with God. With time, man developed systems of religions based on his understanding of worship. Often their practices centred on rules, regulations, rituals, ordinances, institutions, doctrines, etc that sometimes drive people away rather than bring them into personal relationships with God. The following scriptures show the differences as well as illustrate how to move from religion to true righteous relationships with God:

1. Religion delights in ritualistic observance of ordinances rather than meaningful relationship with God. Paul challenged the Galatians - "But now, after that ye have

known God, or rather are known of God, **how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements**, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? **Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years**. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11). In contemporary times the manner of observance of seasons like Christmas, Easter, etc reveals whether a person is religious or in relationship with God.

2. In correcting religious leaders, Jesus pointed out that religion places greater emphasis on keeping laws and regulations to the neglect of things that really matter "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, **and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone**" (Matthew 23:23).

3. Religious people take greater delight in physical establishments than in relationship with God "For **Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities:** but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof" (Hosea 8:14). "And Jesus went out, **and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple**. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:1-2).

4. Religion revels in historical heritage and traditions rather than in personal relationships with God. The Samaritan woman at the well attempted to draw Jesus into an inherited religion of the fathers but Jesus

pointed out that she did not know what she worshipped - “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, **the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.** God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:20-24). By this, Jesus pointed out that **personal relationship with God is not a matter of location, locality or institutions! You can relate to God anywhere you are.**

5. Religion burden lives with rituals, regulations, etc but relationship with Christ relieves of burdens. **Christ did not invite followers to temples, synagogues or religious rulers but to Himself.** “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, **and I will give you rest.** Take my yoke upon you, and **learn of me;** for I am meek and lowly in heart: **and ye shall find rest unto your souls”** (Matthew 11:28,29). “And he saith unto them, **Follow me,** and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

6. Religion centres on compliance with codes of practices to the neglect of heart relationship with God. “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And

shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? **For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God”** (Romans 2:25-29).

Christianity in its true form is more than a religion. It is more than membership in a reputable church; it is more than keeping rules and regulations; it is more than magnificent establishments and church buildings; it is more than wonderful order of worship; it is more than conformity to church’s code of practices; it is more than observance of ceremonies, religious ordinances and rituals; it is more than the lifestyle or personality of the pastor. All these can offer external superficiality, sentimentality and glamour that feeds personal ego but add nothing to the eternal benefit of the soul. Christianity is about a personal relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Do you have that relationship? Come to Jesus today. Look to Him and be saved now.



Your spiritual welfare is our concern. For further help, please contact: **VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

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