

Practical Religion
LESSON 9: FORMALITY

Having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Formal v. True Religion

- I. *Formal religion is not religion.*
 - a. Two Types of Formality
 - i. Religion that consists in keeping religious *tradition and ordinances*.
 - ii. Religion that consists in *talk and profession*.
 - b. The Uselessness and Sin of Formality
 - i. Formality is *insufficient*. (Ro. 2:28)
 - ii. Formality is *offensive*. (Is. 1:10-15)
 - iii. Formality is *ruinous*. (Mt. 15:8, 9)
 - c. The Reality of Formality
 - i. Nothing is so *common* in churches as formal religion. (Rv. 2:14)
 - ii. Nothing is so *dangerous* to our souls as formal religion. (Mt. 15:9)
 - iii. Nothing is so *foolish* as formal religion. (Ps. 94:9; Ro. 2:16; Rv. 2:2)
- II. The *heart* is the seat of *true* religion.
 - a. The Importance of the Heart
 - i. The heart is the real test of *man's character* and religion. (Pr. 23:7; 1 Sa. 16:7)
 - ii. The heart is the place where *saving religion must begin*. (Ac. 16:14; Ez. 36:26; Ps. 51:17)
 - iii. The heart is the seat of *true saving faith* and spring of *true holiness*. (Ro. 10:10; Lk. 8:15)
 - b. Two Types of Heart
 - i. When the heart is wrong, *all is wrong* in God's sight.
 - ii. When the heart is right, *God can overlook many things* that are defective.
 - c. The Place of Formality in True Religion
- III. *Heart religion must never expect to be popular.*
 - a. Formal Religion's Popularity
 - i. It *perfectly suits* the *unregenerate conscience* of man.
 - ii. It *gratifies* the *secret self-righteousness* of man.
 - iii. It *pleases* the *natural indolence* of man.
 - b. Heart Religion's Unpopularity (Ac. 14:22)
 - i. Unpopular by *nature*.
 - ii. *Historically* unpopular. (Ps. 69:12; Ez. 33:32; 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; Mt. 23; 2 Ti. 4:3).
 - c. God's Estimation of Heart Religion
 - i. He *approves* of and *honors* it. (Ez. 36:26; Jn. 4:23; Ps. 51:17; 1 Pt. 3:4)
 - ii. He *will proclaim his approval* of it to all *at the last day*. (Mt. 25:34, 21; Lk. 12:8; 22:28, 29)

Application (Ro. 2:29)

- I. Formal religion presents an immediate and immense danger to Christians.
- II. Formal religion's only foil is rending *and* rendering the heart to Christ sincerely and promptly.
- III. True religion's great shield is believing in, hoping for, and loving Christ's appearing from the heart.