

The Power of the Gospel

**1) The Gospel Makes Us Righteous,
Not Religious**

***'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,
for it is the power of God to salvation for
everyone who believes, for the Jew first and
also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of
God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is
written, "The just shall live by faith"'***

(Rom.1:16-17)

Religion originates from the Latin word ligare, meaning to tie or bind. Religion can be defined as a system of rules designed to bind people to the system that invented them

- ✓ **'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious' (Acts 17:22)**
Deisidaimonesteros from deido = fear; daimonia = demon
- ✓ **'...according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee' (Acts 26:5). Threskeia - to be careful and concerned about externals, e.g. rituals, ceremonies, external behavior emphasized by the system**

- ✓ ***'...if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh' (Col.2:20-23).
Ethelothreskeia = will-worship, voluntary submission to rules***

- ✓ **Religious people are those who impose a system of external observances upon others to bind them to themselves, and those who out of fear or self-righteousness submit to them**
- ✓ **Religion has an unwritten rule book or to-do list. The focus is on my behaviour**
- ✓ **The worst thing to happen to Christianity was to turn it into a religion. It shapes what the Church teaches and Christian book stores sell**
- ✓ **Religion attracts people who ask, 'What must I do...?'**
- ✓ **Jesus destroys that pathway to salvation with the law**

- ✓ **Religion is the antithesis of the gospel**
- ✓ **The emphasis of religion is about what we are told we have to do for God to love us, accept us or bless us. The gospel is the announcement of what God has done for us in Christ**
- ✓ **Religion says 'do'; the gospel says 'done'**
- ✓ **Religion and the gospel are enemies**
- ✓ **Satan is the architect of religion. It is his masterpiece**
- ✓ **He failed to destroy Christianity through persecution, but corrupted it through religion**

Sadly, many encounter Christianity in the form of religion and turn away from it. E.g.

- ✓ **E.g. the Dark Ages**
- ✓ **Documentaries about cults that split up families, religious fanatics who blow up abortion clinics or who tell the world that God hates gays, super rich mega-churches, tele-evangelists, etc.**

- ✓ **When Jesus arrived on earth He entered an environment that was steeped in religion and found Himself in a head on confrontation with it. E.g. the cleansing of the temple**
- ✓ **Religious legalism confuses truth with tradition. Between OT and NT the scribes and elders invented thousands of laws to define the existing 613 commandments, called the *Talmud*. And the Pharisees tried to keep them all**
- ✓ **Religious legalism also confuses truth with preference. E.g. Drinking wine, smoking, home schooling, food laws, listen to secular music, etc. Good reasons, but not Bible**
- ✓ **We are not under law but led by the Spirit**

Examples of religious tradition from Lk.11:37-54

- ✓ **Ceremonial washing of hands**
- ✓ **Any religious system that wants you to be more holy than Jesus is wrong**
- ✓ **Fasting. Some fasted twice a week. The law only commanded one fast per year**
- ✓ **Tithing.** *'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone' (Lk.11:42)*
- ✓ **Religious legalism strains at a gnat and swallows a camel**

- ✓ **Position and glory is important to the religious. Best seats, titles, climbing the ladder, etc.**
'Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces' (Lk.11:43)
- ✓ **Religion binds people** *'And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers"' (Lk.11:46)*

**Summary of religion from someone
delivered from it:**

'But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ'

(Phil.3:7-8)

Greek - *skubalon*. The word is primarily used for excrement, especially human excrement

Religion is just a pile of excrement

The reason Jesus was so strongly opposed to religion is that it drives people away from God

It produces self-righteousness, hypocrisy and ends in failure - people giving up and walking away from God

The only thing that can deal effectively with religion is the gospel

- ✓ **Religion asks, 'What would Jesus do?' The gospel asks, 'What has Jesus done?'**
- ✓ **Religion is about self-improvement; the gospel is about imputed righteousness. The gospel is not about you and what you must do for God, but about God and what He has done for you**
- ✓ **The symbol of religion is a ladder. The symbol of the gospel is a cross**
- ✓ **Religion is about us washing the outside of the cup. The gospel is about Jesus washing the inside of the cup**

- ✓ **Religion says that God loves good people who do their best and succeed. The gospel says Jesus is a friend of sinners who laid down His life for the least, the lost, the last; it is for weak people who fall and fail**
- ✓ **Religion says God will forgive your debt, but don't do it again. The gospel says God forgives your debt and you will never be in debt again**
- ✓ **Religion works on the basis of obligation. But grace is not a reward for the hard working; it is a free gift to the undeserving**
- ✓ **Religion believes in karma. Grace teaches that God got even at the cross**

How to spot a religious Christian:

The more religious they are the less they will talk about Jesus. They will focus on issues like don't eat pork, drink wine, listen to this music, take the vaccination, etc.

To the degree people are self-righteous they will hate Jesus. The Pharisees were 100% self-righteous and they had Jesus crucified.

When religion is confronted it reacts violently

'Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple'

(Lk.11:47-51)

**The main source of persecution in the end times
will come from religious people**

It was religious people who opposed Jesus

**But the gospel can change even those who hate
Christ the most. E.g. Paul**

**Remember, the gospel is the power of God
unto salvation**