

Trading Religion for a Relationship

Philippians 3:1-10

Introduction:

1. Religion basically says, "You have to be good enough to attain heaven." I was raised in a religious system and this is what I thought.
2. But I began to learn that religion and God's Word often contradict. For example, notice the following verses - **Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5**
 - Religion says, "You have to keep our rules, rites, ceremonies, and requirements if you want God to forgive you of your sins and have any hope of heaven when you die."
 - But what you just read in your Bible says something completely different.
3. Please turn to Philippians 3. The man who wrote this was the apostle Paul. He was a man working feverishly to try and gain acceptance before God. He was into religion, big time.
4. But one day on the road to Damascus, Paul was struck down by the resurrected Christ, and that day was a turning point in Paul's life.
 - That day he traded religion for a relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - This resurrection day can be a turning point for you!
5. Here in this passage of Scripture, Paul will reveal himself to us in three different ways. Most likely you will be able to relate your life to one of these three areas.

First, we see Paul - the religious man. Verses 4-6

1. In verse 3, Paul is basically saying that he has no confidence in his fleshly efforts to try to gain acceptance with God. His confidence was in Christ, but it wasn't always this way.
2. At one time Paul possessed **great** pride and confidence in his religious achievements. If anyone could have trusted in his fleshly exploits to get him to heaven, Paul was the man.
vs. 4

Paul was born into a religious home with a great religious heritage. vs. 5

Paul was a leader in his religion. vs. 5

- A Pharisee had reached the very summit of religious experience.

Paul kept the religious law diligently. vs. 6

- He was conscientious and meticulous, dotting every "i" and crossing every "t." He kept the rules better than most.

Paul was zealous to protect his religion. vs. 6

- He viewed Christians as a threat to his religion, so he persecuted them and sought to shut their mouths up, and he did it with great zeal.
3. So Paul had the religious thing going. Outwardly, when he compared himself with others, **his** assessment was that he considered himself very righteous. **Galatians 1:14**

Second, we see Paul - the empty man.

1. Paul thought that all of his religious achievements and deeds would gain him a place of favor with God, but in verse 7 he says, "*But what things **were** gain to me, those I counted loss...*"

2. What is Paul saying? The word "counted" means "to evaluate, to assess." There was a day when Paul added up all of his religious achievements and found his spiritual bank account to be completely empty. That was the day he met Jesus on that road.
3. When Paul opened his books to evaluate his spiritual wealth, he discovered that apart from Jesus Christ everything that he had lived for was worthless (refuse).
4. This may describe some of you. You have sought for fulfillment in religious acts, rituals, and achievements, but you are still empty. You lack that total peace with God.
 - You long for acceptance and forgiveness with God, but no matter what you do, you still doubt.
5. Other people may try to fill their life with money, possessions, hobbies, family, etc., but you have a body, soul (heart), and spirit (that part of you made to fellowship with God). You will not be a complete, whole person until your spirit is in fellowship and right with the Lord.

Third, we see Paul - the fulfilled man. Verse 8-10

1. In verses 8-10 we no longer see a man boasting about his religious achievements, but yet a man with total peace. Paul's entire focus had changed.
2. What was the difference? The last two words of verse 7 help us to understand the drastic change. *"...what things **were** gain to me (religious heritage and achievements) those I counted loss **for Christ.**"*
3. There came a day when Paul abandoned his confidence in all his religious works and chose to place all his faith and confidence in Christ and what Christ has done and accomplished.
4. Notice how emphatic he is in verse 8. He counted his religious works as dung that he might win Christ (have a personal relationship with Christ.)
5. Paul finally understood what many religious people have a hard time understanding - I don't have to **do** anything to be accepted with God; Christ has already done it all. How?
 - Look at verse 10 - He died for sin: every act of disobedience, every evil thought and deed, every curse word, every lustful thought or action. He paid the penalty for every sin. **1 Peter 3:18; Romans 5:6**
 - But a dead Savior can't give you eternal life. He rose again, proving He was the resurrection and the life.
 - Because of His death for sin, God can justly forgive you of your sin. Because of His resurrection, God can impart His very life to you.
6. How does this happen? It all happens on the basis of your **faith** in Jesus Christ. The moment you, as a sinner, place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you no longer rely on your works, but you rely totally and exclusively on Him - God forgives and cleanses you of all sin and places the very life of His Son in you. You are now found **in Him!**
 - Look at verse 9 and notice the last two words - **by faith.**
 - The moment Paul turned loose of all his own self-righteousness and placed all of his faith and trust in Christ, he received the righteousness which is of God by faith.

In Conclusion:

1. Paul was a new man, a totally fulfilled man. He said, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me." **Galatians 2:20**
2. Which one of these three points describes you this morning? Religious, empty, or do you stand fulfilled and at total peace with God?
3. Jesus Christ died for your sin and rose from the dead that He might live in you and have a relationship with you. It has nothing to do with religion, but a relationship with this living Savior.