

RELIGION LEADS TO DEATH



FORGET RELIGION – TRY FAITH INSTEAD

Religion is dangerous. For millennia it has led to the eternal damnation of millions of people who were sucked in by religious systems that follow rules and regulations instead of faith in Jesus Christ. Religion never saves anyone. Faith in Jesus Christ does. Of course, you can have “faith”, but in the wrong things, and be damned forever. A friend taught me many years ago about the sort of faith certain denominations adhere to, saying “They are very sincere, but they are sincerely wrong”.

Organised religion often ensnares people with rules and regulations – commandments of men. Yet the same rule makers do not abide by their own rules. Why? Because they know they cannot live up to the standards they impose on everyone else, and are hypocrites. Even if they manage to abide by these rules (tradition), in the case of the Jewish leaders it was hardly ever to respect God (they rejected Him by rejecting Jesus), but to impress those around them:

⁵Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? ⁶He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you **hypocrites**, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. ⁷Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the **commandments of men**. ⁸For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. ⁹And he said unto them, Full well ye **reject the commandment of God**, that ye may keep your own **tradition**. – **Mark 7:5-9**

The religious leaders of Jesus’ time were so busy monitoring the “mistakes” others made (the speck of dust that is in another person’s eye) that they were incapable of seeing their own shortcomings (the beam in their own eye). Jesus rebuked them for this:

¹Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye **judge**, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³And why beholdest thou **the mote that is in thy brother's eye**, but considerest not **the beam that is in thine own eye**? ⁴Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ⁵**Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye**; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. – **Matthew 7:1-5**

They were forever finding fault, and hounded Jesus and His disciples so that they could throw the Law at Him. Imagine being so blinded by rules that the incredible miracle of the healing of an afflicted person would not even register but rather that it was done on the “wrong” day!

⁷And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; **that they might find an accusation against him**. – **Luke 6:7**

Even in our day, in the Christian church, there are many man-made rules that are often observed more than plain and simple faith. In my time in the ministry, I witnessed many of these things and this ultimately caused me to leave. Did I leave the organised church? In the

formal sense, yes. Did I leave my faith? Definitely not! Here are some of the dangerous areas:

1. The urge to have the biggest and most expensive church building in the area. The model of the first century church was that people met in private homes where they worshiped, prayed, ministered to one another, and shared meals. Money generated as income was used for the direct benefit of the members. See 1 Corinthians 16:1-3,9.
2. The deification of the pastor. For many churches the pastor is the pillar of church life. His word is often law. The model of the first century church was that Jesus should be the head, not man. See Colossians 1:18.
3. A complex hierarchical structure where posts are created to give selected people positions of power. The first century church had a simple but effective structure of deacons and elders. For the rest, the congregation exercised the various spiritual gifts the Spirit gave them. See 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 for the spiritual gifts; Acts 6:1-7 for the appointment of deacons; and Acts 14:23 for the appointment of elders.
4. Eloquent sermons that focus more on what God can do to please us than the other way round. Church leaders, and even members of the congregation, monitor what is said from the pulpit. Teach Word-based doctrine that makes hearers with itching ears feel guilty or uncomfortable, and they leave, and the preacher is rebuked. Sadly the pastor is not always the guilty party, maybe wanting to preach the truth but being prevented from doing so. The first century church focused on a close walk with God, in faith, based on sound doctrine, and disobedience was dealt with in line with the Word of God. See 2 Timothy 4:3.

For a genuine believer, it is easy to be side-tracked. This is the trap the devil sets for you – keeping you so busy that your faith disintegrates while you are trying to please the system with works. Get out of it. Get rid of customs that you have learnt but which have no value. All that that will ensure your eternal reward with Jesus Christ in heaven is your faith in Him, not in the system or the works. Only faith matters. Everything else is sin. See Romans 14:23.

Does it mean that we should not be involved in the organised church at all? Not in the least. We are admonished to contribute, and as part of the Body of Jesus Christ, perform the role we are expected to. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. There are enough members in the local church so that each member really needs to perform only one task. Just as each part of your body performs one function, so it is in the church. In fact, taking up more functions effectively robs somebody else of the part they have to play.

CONCLUSION

When you appear before Jesus' judgement seat (2 Corinthians 5:10) you have to answer for what you have done while in the body (the church). Works done in faith lead to rewards:

⁶For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, **I have kept the faith:** ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. – **2 Timothy 4:6-8**

Are you going to join Paul and so many others in heaven after getting your reward?