

Relationship or Religion

Introduction

A. Modern saying, "Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with Christ."

1. Usually implies less authority, rules, laws, obligations.
2. Implies that "freedom" is anti-establishment, hippy-like "free-love".
3. Implies No "legalism", no judgments, "Free to be me", "Jesus loves me the way I am (in my sins of fornication, indecency, vulgarity, immodest dress, drinking, worldliness, etc.)

B. Modern emotion driven churches VERSUS Traditional dead, legalistic, dry.

1. They call themselves "Spirit-filled".
2. Nearly all Protestant churches have succumbed to this trend.
3. There is a tolerance of the ecstatic tongues.

C. They give the example of the Ethiopian eunuch as finding in Jesus what he could not find in Jerusalem: Law versus Grace. They are wrong about both Law and Grace, as well as what the eunuch found in Acts 8.

D. "Religion" has become a bad word, a pejorative term.

1. **Yet James 1:26-27** uses the term with approval. Our "religion" is vain without the works of mercy and godly living.
2. The false distinction between religion and relationship has done great damage in the church.
3. On the radio and nearly all pulpits, we are constantly bombarded with the condemnation of "works" salvation as opposed to faith and grace.

-- These teachings come straight from the seminaries. It is called "Neo-Orthodox" which is a sort of upgrading of the classic "Liberalism" which discredited the Bible as a totally human and mythological book.

I. "Religion" in the Bible

A. The Greek word "theskeia" is from the idea of trembling with fear before God.

1. This word implies first Reverence toward God, then the Worship and Service offered to God. Especially the outward worship or ritual. Yet as in **James 1:27**, the Bible emphasized that godliness and works must accompany all our obedience toward God.

2. The word is universally translated "religion". It implies active obedience and devoted faithful worship.

B. The Latin root of "religion" is "religare" which means to tie or bind (as in our words ligament, ligature). Holds together.

1. Bound to God by a covenant: the New Covenant (**Hebrews 8:8-13**)
2. Implies our obligations to God.

II. Christianity is a Relationship with Christ.

A. There is no relationship outside of His Covenant.

1. Nor is there without Reverence, the fear of God, respect.
2. “Bonds” of covenant = “religion”: godliness, worship – **James 1:26-27**

B. Matthew 11:28-30 Yoke is easy and Burden is light

1. Yet it is a “yoke” – as oxen yoked to a plow that tills a field under the guidance of farmer.
2. Contrast the yoke of the Old Testament with the New Testament/Covenant. Yet the New is still a Covenant.
3. Covenant implies obligations of two parties:
 - a. Not just God’s promises to us,
 - b. But also, our promises to God.

III. “Bond Servants” – We are Slaves of Christ.

A. Romans 1:1. We are not absolutely free because we are slaves to Christ.

1. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** We are bought with a price, redeemed.
2. **Romans 6:16-18.** We are either slaves of righteousness or slaves of sin.

B. Like the “bonds of matrimony”

1. Established by an oath.
2. Wedding Vows of fidelity and devotion to one another. Agreement to work together toward the common goals of having and raising children, nourishing and disciplining, denying oneself to reach these goals.
3. **Ephesians 5:31-32** Two become one flesh
 - a. Mystery of Christ and the church
 - b. **v. 22-32** Bride of Christ
4. Cannot have a true relationship without true religion, with true covenant obligations. True religion would mean proper relationship.

C. Bonds of Law

1. The Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses on two tables of stone: one of obligations toward God and one of obligations toward our neighbors.

2. **James** also states the “royal law,” **2:8** and the “law of liberty.”

3. Laws define the “plan of salvation,” that is, the terms of pardon for the alien sinner before he enters a “relationship” with Christ, “in Christ” **Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 3:27** as well as the terms of remaining in that relationship. “Be thou faithful unto death,” **Revelation 2:10, et.al.**

4. The modern Christians who say “relationship not religion” do not understand either “relationship” or “religion”. Both are diminished.

a. If only emotional, it is only fleshly.

b. A lot of tears, shouts, hallelujahs, prayers, and songs, “Dancing in the streets with the Spirit of God.” “Jesus is my lover,” “God wants you to be happy.”

-- but very little of the Word and “thus saith the Lord”

-- forgiveness without the strings attached.

Conclusion

A. The Damage has been done – as the church is moved further from its true nature as a group bound together by the Covenant of Christ and the discipline of the church with its Scriptural order of elders and deacons.

B. The Damage was done because churches have avoided the hard-sell of Authority and Law in all areas Preferring the soft-sell appeal of emotions.

1. Thus religion and tradition is the evil, they say.

2. There is no such thing as “no religion”. There is true religion and false religion, the vain or empty religion that takes its place.

3. They think themselves superior in their “living” emotional faith over the “dead” faith of traditional worship. Yet quickly their non-traditions become traditions.

C. If you have a relationship with Christ, it is only if you were baptized INTO Christ, Galatians 3:27, and “walk in the light”, 1 John 1:7 of faithfulness to the Covenant, or Lordship of Christ Jesus.

D. Emotion driven religion is effeminate, empty of substance, but big on feelings like paganism and all human religion. Thus it is a rejection of the “patriarchy” of the Bible which demands that men lead according to the authority of the written law of Jesus.