

Five Kinds of Religion, C.W. Naylor

- Taken verbatim from **C.W. Naylor, Secret of a Singing Heart**
- Christians do not all believe in the same sort of religion. True, they all believe in one God, and in one Bible, and in a general way in many of the same things. When we come to the practical side of religion, however, there are about five kinds of the Christian religion. Four of these produce little happiness, in fact may hinder happiness.
- I want you to think of examples of each kind of the 5 kinds of religions and we will discuss them.

RELIGION OF SELF-DENIAL

First, there is the “don't religion”. It is the religion of self-denial. It is hedged in with numerous restrictions. It is a religion in which the worshiper is kept in a straight jacket. It is largely a negative religion. Those having this religion may be very strict, very sincere, very earnest, but they never can be truly happy. Happiness never comes from the purely negative aspect of life. When we deny ourselves anything in religion the purpose should not be merely that we be without it, but that we may put in its place something greater, something that will contribute more to our happiness and well-being. Religion is intended to make people free, with the highest type of freedom. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," is the slogan of the New Testament. A “don't religion” is conducive to bondage. There is a sort of satisfaction in this don't religion. It may gratify the sense of duty, but we must get a different sort of religion in order to know the secret of the singing heart.

RELIGION OF WORKS

The second kind of religion is the “do religion”. It consists of merely following forms and ceremonies, or obeying rules and regulations, or doing works of merit. Its followers may find considerable satisfaction in reading prayers, bowing down and arising, in making the sign of the cross, in keeping holy days, making pilgrimages in closely following outlined ceremonials and going through forms. Some of the forms of religion have a certain value in giving the soul an uplift, but they are a poor substitute for the realities of true religion. With this formalism there may be stately singing by trained choirs, there may be grand organs pealing forth, there may be intellectual discoursing, with the heart of genuine religion absent. The esthetic (A guiding principle in matters of artistic beauty and taste) sense is gratified while the soul is left unfed or perhaps impoverished. This “do religion” trusts in works. It draws much satisfaction from what it has done. There was much of this sort of religion among the old Pharisees. But who ever saw a

Pharisee who was truly happy, whose heart sang with joy? No, a religion of mere works, of forms and ceremonies, can bring little true happiness.

RELIGION OF THE LAW

Another form of religion is the Sinai religion. It hedges in lives with "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." It is the mere keeping of commandments. It is a worshiper of authority. It is doing because one must. It is refraining from doing for fear of punishment. The God of Sinai still thunders forth in this religion. He is a great and awful God, crowned with majesty and glory, but far removed from the worshiper. He is worshiped in fear and trembling at the foot of the mountains whose summit is hidden in angry clouds. Out of these clouds flash the lightnings of divine vengeance. It is a stiff and rigorous religion. There is little of grace or mercy in it. It is walking by rule. There is little in it to start the songs that come from a peaceful and happy heart.

RELIGION OF EMOTIONS

Then there is what may be called the slippery religion. It is one that people must hold fast with all their might lest it should slip away from them. People who have this type of religion are constantly in fear of losing it. If they do this, or that, or the other thing, they wonder, "Now, have I lost my religion?" They are always examining themselves. They are always questioning and wondering. They cannot for long settle down to certainty. They are often overwhelmed with doubts and fears. They are constantly observing their emotions to see whether or not these emotions indicate whether they still have religion or have lost it.

Perhaps they pray and earnestly try to draw near to God. Then if joy and happiness come they are satisfied and sure they have their religion. But presently a dark day comes. Their emotions subside. Then they wonder again whether they still have their religion. In reality their struggle is not to keep their religion, but to keep their emotions and to satisfy their own questionings and doubts. This religion carries them alternately to the mountain top, then to the depths of the valley of humiliation. It is truly an "up and down" religion. This slippery sort of religion can never be the source of true and lasting happiness.

NEW TESTAMENT RELIGION

The fifth and true type of religion, the religion that corresponds with the teachings of the New Testament and with the experiences of those who have learned the inner and fuller realities of religion, is that religion which is of the heart. It is not a religion of restriction, neither of formalism. It is neither Sinai religion, nor a

slippery religion. It is a religion in which the heart is in its natural element. It is a religion of peace and contentment, a religion of joyful service. It is the natural expression of the soul. It is a peaceful and harmonious relation with God. It is the relation of a child and its father. Its elements are simplicity, sincerity, purity, faith, love, and all the fruits of the Spirit. It is a Spirit-filled life. All these things just mentioned are the deep sources that feed the bubbling springs of joy that flow forth in the waters of rejoicing and song.

In this sort of religion God is not a great and terrible monarch, a stern judge, a task-master; nor his laws a set of hard decrees. No, the Christian religion as seen in its true light is "good tidings of great joy to all people." It is written, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." With such a religion we not only can read of the joys of salvation in the Scriptures, but have the experience of them in our own souls. In this sort of Christian life we do not fear God in the sense of being afraid of him. We do not tremble before him.

Godly fear becomes the equivalent of reverential love and out of divine and spiritual love flow greater joys than flow out of natural love.

TWO SIDES OF THE TRUE RELIGION

Real religion has two sides—first, the inside, the relationship of the soul with God. The Scripture says, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." That means to get acquainted with God, get on good terms with him. Know his good qualities. Come into close contact and association with him. To know him thus is to be at peace with him. We must have the real inner experience of divine life in the soul and union with Christ. This is open to everyone who will seek it in God's way.

The other side of religion is the outside. There can be a true outside of religion only when there is a true inside religion. James defines the outside of religion by saying,

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27)

—a pure and holy inner life, a pure and blameless outer life, devoted to service and helpfulness. This is the religion that is a well-watered land, full of springs and fruitfulness. It is a land of song and cheer and of true blessedness.