

Religion

by James Smith

James Smith's sermon emphasizes that true religion is a personal relationship with God characterized by coming to, receiving from, resting in, and rendering to Him.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Micah 6:8, Matthew 11:28, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:8, Colossians 3:17, James 1:27, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "True Religion", "Christian Living"

Description

James Smith preaches on the essence of true religion, emphasizing that it involves a deep knowledge of God, union with God, and consecration to God. He explains that real religion consists of coming to God as a sinner, receiving from God's grace, resting in God's promises, and rendering all aspects of life to God in gratitude and love. Smith challenges listeners to examine whether they truly meet the standard of being religious as outlined in the Scriptures.

Transcript

RELIGION is a term which is used by different people in a very different sense; and men are reckoned religious by very different rules. If a man goes to a place of worship, attends to certain religious duties, and abstains from certain flagrant sins--he is called a religious man. But there is no real religion in all this. Real religion supposes the knowledge of God, union with God, and consecration to God. Nor can a man be justly called a religious man--unless he has a Scriptural and experimental knowledge of God, is in vital union with God, and acts as one consecrated to the service and glory of God. A name is often substituted for the nature; and a form for the power of godliness. Real religion consists essentially in four things.

First, in coming to God.

Sinning is departing from God. By repentance a man is brought seriously to think, and deeply to feel. In conversion he stops--and turns quite round. By faith he comes to God, speaks with God, and seeks restoration to the favor of God.

In the commencement of religion--the soul comes to God as a sinner, confesses its guilt, deplors its condition, and pleads for pardon. There is deep feeling, earnest desire, and ardent prayer. There is faith in God's existence, and in his character as revealed in the gospel. There is a readiness to submit to his will, to approve of his plan of salvation, and to be rescued from ruin by free grace alone. The man will not rest in religious rituals, or be satisfied with ceremonies--but will seek for the Lord himself. Nor can he rest until

he finds him.

A truly religious man is reconciled to God, is at peace with God, and walks in fellowship with God. God is the object of his steady faith, warmest love, and constant worship. He is brought back to where Adam started from, when he wandered out of the way of understanding, and fell into the sin which destroyed him. Union to God, and sympathy with God, are the two principle things he desires to enjoy; and distance from God, and unlikeness to God, are the two principal things he dreads. Reader, are you religious according to this standard?

Second, in receiving from God.

At first, before the fall, God required of us, we were to bring to him. This is the religion of the law. Now, as poor perishing sinners, we are invited to come and receive from God. This is the religion of the gospel. Sin has stripped us of every good thing, and has left us naked, destitute, and bare! God has revealed himself in Jesus, as possessing all that we need--and invites us to come and receive from him, without money, and without price. The Spirit of God in the heart shows us our need, generates strong desire, unfolds the fulness of gospel grace, and then leads us to God, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The truly religious man receives pardon from the hand of God, justification from the mouth of God, sanctifying grace from the heart of God, and feels himself at home in the presence of God. He daily learns more and more his need of Divine communications, and therefore daily comes to the Divine fulness to be supplied.

He must have personal, heartfelt, and frequent dealings with God; nor will anything short of this satisfy him. The Lord God is his sun and shield; the Lord gives him both grace and glory; nor will he withhold from him any good thing, while he walks uprightly. He lives dependent--and yet happy. He has nothing in himself--but possesses all things in God. He has, therefore, daily and hourly to go out of himself, and to God for all his supplies, so that his life is a life of faith in God, and of fellowship with God.

Reader, is this your religion? Do you daily feel that in yourself you are a poor, empty, worthless creature--and must live depending on the Divine bounty, pleading at the Divine throne, and receiving all your supplies gratuitously from the Divine fullness?

Third, in resting in God.

Sin has made man a restless creature. He left his foundation, and lost his ballast--when he fell. The sinner is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. The spirit of restlessness and wandering is in his heart. He seeks rest and finds none--just because he seeks it in the wrong quarter; he seeks it on the shifting sand, and not on the solid rock. Jesus sees man in this condition, and, sympathizing with him, cries, "Come, unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden--and I will give you rest."

The sinner, weary and depressed, under Divine teaching comes to Jesus, and at his feet enjoys peace, pardon, and repose. He obtains rest from the burden of sin, from guilty fears, and the dread of hell. He receives the atonement, submits to God's righteousness, and finds access with confidence to God through faith in Jesus. Now he understands that verse, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." Having come to God through Christ, the direction is given, "Rest before the Lord

and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes."

He now rests on God's word of promise, on his solemn oath, on his gracious covenant, on his paternal relation, and on his infinite and unchangeable love. His soul is steady. He has an anchor which he casts on that which is within the veil, even the precious, pleading blood and prevalent intercession of the great High Priest. He rests in God now, and is happy. The peace of God keeps his heart and mind, and the sense of restlessness which once tormented him so much--is lost.

Reader, have you sought and obtained rest at the feet of Jesus? Do you rest in God as your covenant God and gracious Father? True religion is the soul resting in God, having received full supplies from God, as the result of coming to God.

Fourth, it is rendering to God.

Having come to God, being graciously supplied by God, and enjoying sweet repose in God--the soul now cries out, "What shall I render unto the Lord--for all his benefits towards me!" The person, the life, the time, and all the talents become consecrated to God. The man wishes to live for God. To work for God. To be of use in God's world and in God's church. To bring glory to God's name. He works not for a title to life--for he already has that. He works not for supplies--for he already has them. But he works to express his gratitude, to show his love, and to magnify God's free and sovereign grace!

He is willing to fill any situation, to do any work, or be anything--if he may but honor that blessed Jesus who died for him, and glorify that gracious God who has saved him by his grace! He lays his property at the feet of Jesus, offers all he has to Jesus, and only begs to be employed by Jesus. This is the natural effect of true faith. This proves that the life of God is in the soul. This makes it manifest that the man is created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

In such a case there is no doubt of sincerity or spirituality. The man has not only the evidence in himself--but he presents an evidence to all who are around him. He is manifestly declared to be a child of God. He is proved to be a vessel of mercy. His calling and election are sure.

Such, then, is true religion--and nothing else is. Unless, therefore, a man comes to God as a poor sinner for life and salvation--unless he receives from God grace to pardon his sins and sanctify his nature--unless he finds rest in God in this restless world--and unless he renders unto God according to that which the Lord has done for him--he is not a truly religious man--he is not a true Christian!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-smith/religion/>

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