

# Religion vs. Salvation

by Lewis Williams

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*The sermon highlights the difference between having religion and experiencing true salvation, emphasizing that a religion that does not lead to salvation is hellish and of the devil.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:21, John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Timothy 2:5, Titus 3:5, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "True Salvation", "False Religion"

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## Description

Lewis Williams emphasizes the distinction between having a form of religion and experiencing the true salvation that Jesus offers. He illustrates how various cultures and beliefs demonstrate religious practices, but without the redemption from sin and eternal happiness that true salvation brings. Williams warns against being confirmed in a belief that may lead to eternal destruction, highlighting the importance of seeking true salvation through Jesus Christ, rather than relying on outward acts of religion or man-made doctrines.

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## Transcript

Before studying the text closely, there are a few kindred points to which we wish to call your attention. The first one is: Man is a sort of religious animal. By that we mean that he is naturally religious to the extent that he is bound to worship something. Webster gives the definition of religion as: "The outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god, or gods, having power of their destiny." And wherever you find humanity, you will find some form of religion.

Peary, in relating the story of his trip to the North Pole, in speaking of the Eskimos, stated that those people have no religion. He then went on to describe their acts regarding their belief in spirits, the devil and the supernatural, thereby showing that they do have a form of religion. Their outward acts prove their belief, and Webster calls that religion. The Chinaman has his joss-house, and the Mohammedan has his forms of worship. In the heart of dark Africa, Dr. Livingstone found the black widow throwing herself upon the burning funeral pyre of her husband. Why did she do thus? In accordance with her belief, if she did that, her spirit would be united with the spirit of her departed husband in the spirit realm. That was her religion, though she had never heard of the white man's God. We have seen where the Indians would place a vessel of food upon the grave of the departed warrior. You ask, What for? In order that his spirit might have something to eat while on its journey to the happy hunting grounds. That was according to their religion, and it was as much a religion as yours or mine. Many men will bow down before an altar in

an upper room behind painted windows, going through the ceremonies of some secret order according to its ritual, and we have had many tell us that that was good enough religion for them. Yes, it is a form of religion, sure enough, and so do the heathen have a form of religion, but neither of them composes or embraces the salvation that the Son of God brought to this old world to save man from sin. Many a man will bow down before an altar in his lodge room, who is as ignorant of God's salvation as that poor heathen across the sea.

Again, it is possible for persons to be confirmed in their belief that their religion is right, and come down to their death-bed and die in that belief, and we do believe that many have thus died and were not aware that they were wrong until they woke up in hell. For proof of our position, let us look at Catholicism and its millions of adherents. How firm they are in their belief -- so firm in the belief that Catholicism is right that when they do turn it makes them conspicuous, and in the testimony, we hear them say, "I was raised a Catholic, and thought I was right." And hundreds of thousands are dying firm in the belief that they are right, and if they are right -- if the religion of Catholicism is right -- then Protestantism is wrong. Yet Catholicism is a religion, and its adherents are very prompt and precise in their outward acts and forms of worship. It is religion, but we would encounter serious difficulty in making our readers believe that it brought to its believers the salvation that the Son of God brought to this world.

Webster defines salvation as, "The redemption of man from the bondage of sin and liability to eternal destruction, and the conferring on him of everlasting happiness." If the religion of Catholicism freed man from the bondage of sin, and conferred on him everlasting happiness, then Protestantism is wrong, and Martin Luther made an awful blunder, and those who have followed him will have just cause to curse him at the Judgment. Yet untold numbers are dying firm in their belief that it is the salvation that Jesus died to bring to sinful man.

Again, we live in a country that abounds with churches of various denominations, all professing to have religion, and on the Sabbath morning thousands upon thousands attend the various places of worship and show by their "outward acts" their recognition of a God -- and Webster says that is religion -- yet how comparatively few there are among them that experimentally know anything about "redemption from sin"! And if the preacher proclaimed that Jesus then and there, that very hour, waited to save them from all sin, and pressed them to immediately seek that "great salvation," how many would accept the message and present themselves as seekers? How many of them would go away surprised and indignant at the audacity of the preacher? And yet the vast majority, if not all, of them, profess to have religion. And, alas! how many of them are dying as they have lived, firm in their belief that their religion is right, when they are strangers to the salvation that redeems from all sin.

If the doctrines that are set forth and the preaching as it is being done from the majority of the pulpits of today, are right, then the going up and down this land by persons known as "holiness evangelists," proclaiming what the average pulpit does not proclaim, i. e., that man can, here and now, be "redeemed from the bondage of sin;" that his heart may be cleansed and made free from the power and presence of sin -- is a colossal blunder. But because they believe that the majority of the pulpits of the land are not teaching the truth regarding salvation, many are sacrificing the comforts of home and its companionships and are doing their utmost to bring men to the light of the truth. Yet the fact remains that thousands are turning away, unwilling to listen, firm in the belief that their religion is good enough, while yet they know they are not "free from the bondage of sin." And many who have thus turned away have thus died.

We say it is possible to have religion, and be firm in the belief that it is right, and thus die, and yet be mistaken and finally be lost. Look at the great religious schools of this day and age and their thousands of students. Those who have their oversight and management believe they are teaching the truth. But there is a class of people who have become so dissatisfied with their teaching, their worldliness and disregard for the supernatural, that they have poured out and are pouring out their money to put up and maintain Bible schools and holiness colleges and universities, where the truth will be taught and their sons and daughters receive an education with a holy reverence for the Bible. But such persons and such schools are looked down upon by the former and older institutions, which still maintain that, though they have left "the old landmarks," they are still right. If that be so, then it is a tremendous waste of the Lord's money to put up and maintain Bible schools and holiness colleges. But we do not believe it to be either a waste of the Lord's money or a waste of time. Neither do we believe it to be wrong, for their teaching corresponds with the Bible. The point we do maintain is that, in spite of the fact that many of the older schools have become worldly and are full of destructive teaching and gross error, and their influences are sapping the spirituality out of the Church, yet many fully and firmly believe in them, and will die in that belief, and will discover their mistake when it is too late.

Once more, we see this same thing being acted out even among some who are classed as "holiness people." The devil likes to create divisions, and if he can do so and get one set of folks to lambasting, cartooning, criticizing, finding fault with or impugning the actions and motives of another set, or a few persons to doing so against a few others, he will be in his element. Know this, that the devil never tries to save men from sin; neither does he lead folks to weep and cry to God to save others from sin. We personally know of instances where persons making a high profession, have gone into a meeting in which honest effort was being made to get souls to God, and have taken steps to interfere and bring discord into that meeting, and, so far as we could observe, were firm in their belief that they were right in so doing.

Again, we know instances where men and women were on their faces crying to God and weeping over lost souls, when others would speak of their efforts or of the meeting as "being of the devil," and, so far as we could see, those persons thought they were right.

We say unto you, the devil wants no better job than that sort of thing. Such persons may think themselves to be right, and go on and die, but unless they turn from such a course, repent, and get back to God, they will wake up to find they have made an awful mistake. All these things can be and are being done under the name of religion.

Paul said, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them." Jesus said, "They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service. Millions of saints have suffered martyrdom at the hands of those who professed and believed in religion; and, on down through the ages until the present day, men and women have done despite to the children of God. They thought and died firm in the belief that they were right, but they will wake up in Hell.

Oh, my precious brother, sister, there is a vast difference between having religion and experiencing the salvation that Jesus brought to this world. A religion that does not make you a meek, humble imitator of Jesus Christ, is not of God; is not godly nor heavenly; it is hellish and of the devil. It may be religion, but it is not salvation.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/lewis-williams/religion-vs-salvation/>

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