

“Useless Religion”
Galatians 6:11-15
Sermon Series: “This Is Us”

Introduction: As we continue with the, “This Is Us,” series, we are going to start going through our core values (although not necessarily in order) because they express who we are. Our third core value states, *“We reject moralism and embrace grace: We proclaim Jesus and His gospel of grace alone (the New Covenant) as the only means of salvation and spiritual growth and refuse to go back to religious legalism and moralism (the Old Covenant).”*

There are only two types of religion in the world: works and grace. Christianity is about grace. It is what Jesus has done for us. Every other religion is about works, which means what we do for God to try to earn His favor or be good enough. Of course, some people try to have a religion of Jesus plus works, but Jesus plus anything equals nothing. He alone is sufficient for our salvation. Non-Christian religions are works apart from Jesus while pseudo-Christian religions are works in addition to Jesus. This is the situation Paul was confronting in his letter to the churches in Galatia. There were some false teachers commonly called Judaizers who were teaching a false gospel of Jesus plus keeping the Mosaic Law as evidenced by being circumcised (Galatians 1:6-8, 2:4, 3:6, 3:10-14).

Main Idea: Any attempt to make ourselves right with God by our own efforts instead of exclusively trusting in the gracious work of Jesus on the cross is useless religion.

Here are some characteristics of useless religion that Paul shares in Galatians 6:11-15:

1. Useless religion is motivated by pride (v. 12-13, Matthew 5:3, Luke 18:9-14, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31). The false teachers in Galatia wanted to be able to look good outwardly to others. That is what religion does. Warren Wiersbe has written, “So, the legalist inflates the ego, flatters the flesh, and pleases the world; the true Christian crucifies all three.”

2. Useless religion is based on outward actions or rituals (v. 12, Philippians 3:1-9). This is based on the statement that “these would compel you to be circumcised. Religion is about what we do, but Jesus died in vain if we can be saved by what we do (Galatians 2:21).

3. Useless religion seeks to please people instead of honoring Jesus (v. 12, Galatians 1:10). The cross is scandalous, offensive, and often bring persecution. This type of religion tries to avoid that by attempting to make people look good outwardly.

4. Useless religion is powerless (v. 13, 15). This type of religion cannot forgive our sins or change our lives. The gospel gives us a new heart and changes us from the inside out. Religion is trying to make ourselves look good outwardly. The Law does not have the power to save us or change us. It only shows us we are sinners in need of a Savior (Galatians 3:19-25, 5:1-6).

5. Useless religion is hypocritical (v. 13). Even genuine Christians can act hypocritically at times, but this type of religion is hypocritical in its essence because it is powerless to produce life change and uses religious rituals to try to cover that.

Conclusion: Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone for the glory of God alone (Galatians 2:16). Are you exclusively trusting Jesus for your salvation?