

Religion or Redeemer

* Word for word transcription of Pastor Rob's Riverside Calvary Chapel teaching on Feb.4, 2024

The battle for peoples hearts...for their faith.....
Faith in a RELIGION....or a REDEEMER.....

PRAY.....

Remember when Paul told the church in Galatia this.....
Gal 1:6 - "*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ.....to a different gospel,*"

Paul could have just stopped with.....*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you.....*

From Jesus.....turning away from Jesus.....

He is the gospel.....isn't He.....

He didn't say, "I marvel, that you are turning away so soon from Him and His gospel, to a different gospel".....

No..... he said, "I marvelled that you were turning away from HIM, to a different gospel.....

Not.... turning away from all of the do's or don'ts AFTER coming to Him.....

We may and will, do some thing's or not do some things AFTER coming to Him.....because He changes us.....

But isn't it ALL ABOUT JESUS.....

Remember when Jesus went to see Martha and Mary because Lazarus had died.....

John 11:23-26 - "*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

24Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

26“And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

THAT’S THE GOSPEL.....

JESUS IS THE GOSPEL.....

Isn’t it simply Jesus.....FAITH IN JESUS.....surrender to Jesus.....rely on Jesus.....trust in Jesus.....live for, with and IN JESUS.....and all the other stuff comes after.....

Isn’t it ALL ABOUT HIM.....

Jesus.....

Relationship.....or.....Religion.....

Religion or Redeemer.....you pick.....even as a Christian...

As Paul told the Galatians....we can fall BACK into a religious, works based mindset....if we don’t always JUST REST IN JESUS.....

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said about Who Jesus needs to be TO US.....

“So, if you want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you must live with him. First he must himself speak to you, and afterwards you must abide in him. He must be the choice Companion of your morning hours, he must be with you throughout the day, and with him you must also close the night; and as often as you may wake during the night, you must say, ‘When I awake, I am still with Thee.’ ” (Spurgeon)

What an incredible and true statement.....

Now, there are countless scriptures we could look at that support this truth that we follow Jesus...a person....and not a religious system filled with rules and regulations....but just to kind of encapsulate it....we’re going to use this little story in the Old Testament.....turn your bibles to 2Kings chapter 5...

2Kings 5 is during the time of Elisha The Prophet, and tells the story Naaman, the leader of the Army in Syria..... This little story helps us to see the difference between trusting in a complex religious system through works.... or trusting in the simplicity of faith in a Redeemer.....

2Kings 5:1 - “*Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honourable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valour..... but a leper*”

Let's stop there.....before the last couple words.....

Even though he wasn't an Israelite..... he was a Gentile and a pagan..... this Naaman was obviously quite a guy.....

Brave, honourable, and it seems like he had quite a bit of integrity, as far as the world is concerned.....

And there's people like that in the world isn't there.....there's lots of people that we know that aren't believers.....but we like them.....and there's some great qualities in them.....

Naaman was all this.....*but a leper*.....

Leprosy, being a leper..... is used many times as a picture of SIN in scripture.....

So the bottom line is that....many people can have so many of these wonderful qualities, and personalities.....but are still SINNERS.....

We ALL SIN and fall short.....the whole world.....

So we need to hear some Good News.....We Need Some Hope.....

2Kings 5:2-3 - “*And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife.*

3Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”

Here's this brave little girl, a slave in captivity.....pushing past any fears she may have had.....and sharing her belief....that this prophet could heal her master.....
In a very real way.....we are ALL this little captive girl.....
We are in enemy territory.....and WE KNOW the cure to the leprosy of the world, the cure to the sin that is killing everyone.....the cure is in a person.....not a system of belief.....but will we be brave enough to share it.....
And say, "If only you were with Jesus, He would heal you and take your sin and forgive you, and give you Life."
Rom 10:14 - *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"*
WE ARE ALL THAT PREACHER.....
Isn't it simply telling people about Jesus.....

2Kings 5:4-7 -

4And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel."

5Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.

6Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.

7And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me."

Just think of this King of Israel, King Jehoram....as representing RELIGION.....

Verse 7 is like RELIGION is saying.....

**“ Am I God.....do I have the power over life and death.....
and do you seriously think that I can forgive and remove sin
from a person and give them life, and make them
righteous.....Do you seriously think I CAN SAVE PEOPLE...”**

**And that’s the honest truth.....that religion and the rituals and
works of man, no matter how hard we try, cannot save us....
And all religions of the world apart from Christ are virtually
the same.....**

**Some might say yeah, but in an evangelical, Bible believing
church, you’re just preaching to the choir.....**

We know it’s just Jesus.....

**But you would be surprised how many times us Christians
can fall back into our religious, self imposed righteous
attempts at securing our salvation.....and finding holiness...**

And when we falter..... the fear that it brings.....

**That’s why Paul addressed the church there in Galatia and
says.....are you turning so soon away from Jesus.....and
trying to now secure your own salvation and maintain your
own status with God.....keeping yourself a score sheet.....**

So religion can’t fix us.....rituals can’t fix us.....

**But remember in our story....Naaman is still counting on
some kind of spiritual ritual to save him.....**

**As many people count on some religious system, or finding
the RIGHT spiritual PATH.....that will lead them to salvation...**

**Or as Christians....we can look for this PATH in scripture, that
will help us live holy lives and overcome sin.....**

**Instead of drawing CLOSER to Jesus.....and seeing that
much of what is spoken about in the New Testament.....is**

God simply telling us THIS IS HOW YOU NOW CAN

LIVE....because you are IN CHRIST.....not....LIVE LIKE

THIS....so you can have Christ.....

What must I do.....Elisha tells Naaman in our story.....

2Kings 5:8 - “So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

This was my story.....I still didn't know anything about Jesus.....I was still steeped in the fears of my upbringing in Catholicism.....and I was trying WITH EVERYTHING I HAD....to be a better man.....but kept failing worse and worse each time.....

And I one night read in an old bible someone had given me....

Matt 11:28 - “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

And that was the beginning of my journey to Jesus.....

It Wasn't come to this religion.....or come to this system of rituals.....It was come to this person.....

And that made sense with me, and it cut deep into my heart and my spirit.....

There was something about getting close to Jesus.....

So also.....Naaman went....seeking help.....seeking hope...

2Kings 5:9-12 - “Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house.

10And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.

11But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’

12“Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.”

The stumbling block of the world.....

Naaman was told to just go to the Jordan and wash seven times and he would be healed.....

The world is told to just believe in Jesus Christ crucified and you will be saved.....faith in Jesus.....

The bible says this is a stumbling block to the Jews....and it's foolishness to the world.....

IT'S SO SIMPLE.....THEY SAY IT'S RIDICULOUS.....

Naaman expected Elisha to come and say some extraordinary prayer and wave his hands in the air, and perform some incredible ritual.....but he didn't.....

The world believes that the power for us and the formula for salvation or enlightenment or holy living.....is somewhere in-between the walls of these HUGE religious organizations.....the mighty Catholic

Church....Islam....Buddhism.....Modern Science.....

OR.....The legalistic, religious, graceless teachings infiltrating the Christian church.....

Many Christians fall back into spiritual rituals for power to help them overcome sin....instead of just drawing CLOSER to Jesus Who has the power....WHO IS THE POWER.....

Just like we came to Him initially to find forgiveness for our sin.....we continue to draw EVEN CLOSER to Him, to practically now OVERCOME those sins.....

When Naaman said, are not the rivers of Damascus. Greater than the Jordan.....

It made me think of my father's comments when I was first was coming to Jesus as my saviour.....

I had left the Catholic church that I was brought up in and that my dad was a part of his whole life.....

He said that I had walked away from my faith.....

And I tried to explain to him that the exact opposite had actually happened..... I was now finding my faith....and my faith, was in Jesus Christ, and His shed blood on the cross for my sins and His resurrection.....

I then told him many of the issues and red flags that I had with the Catholic faith.....

That I was troubled with the worship and prayer to Mary instead of to Jesus, and I questioned the hierarchy of the church with the power of the Pope and his ability to speak infallibly and override scripture.....instead of the power and unchanging infallibility of God's Word.....

And many other things that contradicted what I read in the Word of God.....

And my father responded in the same way that Naaman responded.....

“So you actually think that you know better, and are wiser, and more learned, than the Pope and the leadership of the Catholic Church, and all of the great Catholic saints that have gone ahead of us?”.....

And I said no, I don't think that I am wiser dad, but I do believe that the Word of God is wiser.....and it tells me that there's something wrong with all these religions.....

The massive details of religion, don't sound like GOOD NEWS.....we are told that there is GOOD NEWS for us who need saving.....

But then after being saved.....what about our life in Christ as a Christian.....do we STILL rely on Jesus.....or do we slip into relying on our own goodness and faithfulness, just like all of these religions....going to Church....reading the Bible.....prayingcheck all the boxes.....am I following all the rules and regulations..... these are all good, but they aren't a means to an end..... it all begins and continues with a relationship with Jesus and all of these activities follow....

(When I first came to Jesus, asked forgiveness, and made Him my Lord, and was saved.....I didn't know His Word very well....so I did as the Galatians....and TRIED SO HARD to be holy....but kept failing and failing and actually going deeper into sin...it was like spiritual schizophrenia.....until I read Paul's testimony of a saved Christian.....

Rom 7:19-20 - *“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Paul said.....Oh WRETCHED MAN.....who will save me....

Not.....What will save me.....

And he says THANK GOD.....for Jesus Christ.....

It is JESUS....SPENDING MORE TIME WITH JESUS.....that will cause you to live a holier life and have you overcome sin in your life as a Christian...

NOT religion....or any RELIGIOUS PRACTICE you try to follow.....all the do's and don'ts.....

Paul also told those Galatians.....

Gal 5:1-2 - “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.”

Circumcision is RELIGION.....RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.....

Which are that YOKE OF BONDAGE.....

DON'T FOCUS ON YOUR SIN.....AND WORK ON YOUR SIN....TO OVERCOME SIN....

FOCUS ON JESUS.....HANGOUT WITH JESUS.....

And watch your sins slip away.....

As Paul told the Colossians.....

We have the CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS.....

WE DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING.....

JESUS DOES IT ALL.....

So for those that think simple faith in Jesus is too simple... and that the complexities of religion make more sense....Naaman's servant had an answer.....

2Kings 5:13-14 - “*And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”*

14So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

If the world is told to follow some complex religious system....they might....but why not the simplicity of just washing in Jesus.....that God did it for us.....

But why would God make it so simple for me.....

Eph 2:7 - “...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

JESUS

Let's hear straight from the lips of Jesus...why JUST HIM.....
When Jesus fed the 5000.....afterwards, they all scrambled looking for Him, and when they found Him on the other side of the lake.....Jesus knew that their heart wasn't in the right place, and that they were looking for more signs and wonders.....they we're looking for stuff.....

And they must have thought.....this guy MUST be from God, and there is something legitimate about this guy because look at everything He does.....look at the miracles He performs...so let's find out and ask Him point blank....”What do we have to do.....Jesus give us the details of this new religion because it sounds great and we want it”

John 6:28-29 - “Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

But they didn't get it.....

They didn't understand yet.....that Jesus.....would be the One to do the work.....

So they continued to question Jesus.....and reminded Him of the care they received from the Father in the desert, when He gave them the manna, so that they could have life.....

So they in essence are now saying.....what about You.....
How are YOU.....going to care for us.....and give us life.....
What are you going to do.....

That's what the world asks.....WHAT CAN JESUS DO FOR
ME.....WHY DO I NEED JESUS.....

And then Jesus doesn't say "OK get me a scribe because I'm
gonna lay out a massive, systematic religious program for
you to follow and if you follow it perfectly, you will have
life"...

No, he just says.....

John 6:35 - "*And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life.
He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who
believes in Me shall never thirst."*

And right after that, Jesus said it again, as clear as can be.....

John 6:40 - "*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that
everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have
everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

THAT'S IT.....

Jesus does all the work....takes away my sin.....gives me
His righteousness.....takes the wrath of God that my sin is
deserving of.....FOR ME.....so that I can have everlasting life
with Him in paradise.....

And I just believe in Him, and go to Him.....

NO, NO, NO.....THAT'S TOO EASY.....

I remember as a young man thinking, where is the
hitch?..... there's always a hitch.....

And I remember when it hit me....that there IS NO HITCH.....

Jesus did it all.....I just take the gift.....

THAT.....is the difference between how God loves and how
the world loves.....

God is COMPLETELY UNCONDITIONAL.....

NO HITCHES.....I JUST RECEIVE HIS LOVE.....

WOW.....HOLY SMOKES.....OF COURSE.....

And prior to being saved.....my salvation is not ON THE
CONDITION of my behaviour.....

And it STILL ISN'T.....although my behaviour WILL CHANGE if I'm saved.....

With religion, and rules and regulations, and do's and don'ts.....I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCE.....of ever living a holier life and growing in the image of Jesus.....

Why?

BECAUSE IT DOESN'T WORK.....

....so Paul told us.....

Col 2:23 - "*These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*"

Like I said.....THEY DON'T WORK.....

But as someone clings to Jesus.....goes to Him, spend time with Him.....talks with Him, relies on Him.....asking Him for strength and forgiveness and encouragement.....building your relationship with Him through prayer.....and time in the Word.....THEN.....

You begin to look at your life, and as the weeks and months and years go by.....you begin seeing various sins that you were walking in, and attitudes you had.....just drift away.....and you say, "Wow! How did it that happen.....I wasn't focussing on my sin, my attitudes.....I wasn't following some religious rules....I was just focussing on Him the whole time.....spending more time with Jesus.....reading His Word....praying....asking forgiveness....."

HE DOES IT.....

*Important

Every time you slip back into religious or works based ways of dealing with sin, with guilt, shame, fear, family ties, or cultural pressure.....you are trying to remove these things by your own "goodness", or your own religiosity.....

IT DOESN'T WORK!!!

Jesus is the answer before salvation and after salvation.....

Paul says we must be ESTABLISHED BY GRACE.....which means.....always use God's mercy and grace to deal with

your fallen nature. Don't use your own "goodness" EVEN after seemingly growing in holiness over the years as a Christian.

Our need for Jesus NEVER LESSONS..... in fact...all we really are doing as maturing Christian's, is growing more and more in our realization of our need for Jesus, moment by moment.....resting in His shed blood for us on that tree..... and one day He will bring us into HIS glory!

He just wants to share it with us! Remember He prayed for us....

**"Father let them be where I am.....and experience the glory and love I had with you before the foundations of the earth!"
Amen!!!**

So if you haven't yet, come to Jesus, as your Saviour go to Him.....

It's REAL.....it's not religion.....

**And if you have stopped, relying on Jesus to carry you through this life as a Christian and you have slipped back into relying on your own holiness or religious ways....and you're beating yourself up.....and you're losing hope of overcoming sin in your life.....go back to Him.....He's waiting.....just like He was when you first met Him.....
And you won't have to fear verses like this anymore.....**

Matt 7:21-23 - *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

22"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?"

23"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Matthew says, those who do the will of the Father enter the Kingdom.....

Remember Jesus said the will of the Father was that we believe in the One Whom He sent.....

And these people in verse Matt 7:22, are just DOING STUFF....practicing religion.....religion DOESN'T WORK.....

Those who He knows.....are those who have always just gone to Him.....and trusted in Him.....and surrendered to Him.....and loved Him.....and put their only hope for salvation in His shed blood for their sin on that cross.....and believed He rose again conquering death.....thanking Him for loving us even though we were unworthy.....

Let's be those people.....and not the religious crowd.....

And if you have never gone to Jesus for life....for forgiveness....for everything you're looking for.....

Go to Him.....He's waiting patiently for you.....

It's that simple.....

And for those who like to chew on scripture that has to do with what we looked at today.....

Chew on these portions of scripture from Hebrews 3:3

HE WHO BUILT THE HOUSE HAS MORE HONOUR THAN THE HOUSE.....

And....

Heb 13:10.....

We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.....

And our altar is the cross of Jesus.....

Pray.....

Now Cole is going to lead us in communion.....

And this makes everything we've been looking at here, pretty clear....

In taking communion.....Jesus with His Apostles didn't say....DO THIS TO REMEMBER MY RELIGION.....NO....

He said.....DO THIS TO REMEMBER.....ME.....

Amen.....