

JESUS IS BETTER: letter to the Houstonians

Sermon Study Guide | Part Four: Better than Religion | 10/8/2017 | @thestoryhouston

PURPOSE OF THIS SERMON SERIES

1. To become more familiar with the Bible through a study of Hebrews
2. To convey the stark differences between the Gospel of Jesus and religions of men
3. To inspire people to believe Jesus (as opposed to just “believing in Jesus”)

THE REST OF THE STORY

Religion is easier to follow, but harmful for the soul. It tricks us into thinking that we are good by virtue of our actions or merit; it misleads us and alienates us from God. But Jesus changes everything - he teaches us that following him is not easy, but it is the only way that leads to life abundant.

KEY TEXT: HEBREWS 10:8-14

When Jesus said, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings”...then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, ‘he sat down at the right hand of God,’ and since then he has been waiting ‘until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.’ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

WHY IS IT SO EASY TO FALL INTO THE RELIGIOUS TRAP?

How do we know we’re being religious instead of following Jesus? How does religion affect our souls?

Religion’s Ways:	Jesus’ Ways:
Religion demands obedience to rules and convinces us our actions make us worthy before God.	Through Jesus, we experience freedom, thanks to his sacrifice on the cross. All He asks is for us to be <i>in close relationship</i> with him.
Religion guilt's our conscience and oppresses our hearts, because we’re never “good enough,” regardless of how hard we try.	Through Jesus - our repentance leads to freedom and to life in the fullness of his love. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!
Religion keeps us stagnate, paralyzed by fear, and feeling judged.	Jesus empowers us, and unleashes us to change the world in His name

A HARMFUL PATH

What is **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**?

Moralistic:

Therapeutic:

Deism:

KEY TEXT: LUKE 9:23-24

“Then Jesus said to them all: If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

What will you do to surrender to Christ, and for Christ’s strength to be made perfect in your weakness?

What is the biggest sign that someone is faithful to Christ instead of religious?

GOING DEEPER

What will you need to let go of in order to put God first? What sins are afflicting you and keeping you hostage?

What practices will you adopt in order to develop a strong relationship with Jesus?

Paul’s advice - Cling to Jesus! for it is by His strength and not ours that we’re victorious (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Check out Augustine’s Prayer after his conversion:

Too late have I loved you! You were within me but I was outside myself, and there I sought you! In my weakness I ran after the beauty of the things you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The things you have made kept me from you - the things which would have no being unless they existed in you! You have called, you have cried, and you have pierced my deafness. You have radiated forth, you have shined out brightly, and you have dispelled my blindness. You have sent forth your fragrance, and I have breathed it in, and I long for you. I have tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you. You have touched me, and I ardently desire your peace.

ST. Augustine, Confessions, X, 27, 38