

Becoming Involved in Religion

Text: Matthew 7:13-14, 21

Introduction

1. Getting people involved, especially in religion, is a big problem.
2. To be involved in religion is the most important involvement because it deals with the soul and its eternal destiny.
3. It seems, though, that people would rather be involved in other things.
 - a. Some cannot see any immediate effect either negative or positive.
 - b. Most want immediate gratification.
4. One of the primary tasks of preaching is to stir people to involvement in religion.

I. Why People Fail to Become Involved in Religion

- A. They fail to recognize the value of the soul. (Matt. 16:26)
 1. The soul is valuable because it is eternal.
 - a. It is of unlimited duration having no end.
 - b. The body returns to dust but the soul continues on. (Eccl. 12:6-7)
 2. When one does not realize the soul's value, he is not interested in religion.
- B. They fail to recognize their lost condition.
 1. Examples.
 - a. A child lost in a department store who does not know he is lost will toddle merrily along not realizing the danger he is in.
 - b. The figure of a sheep as presented in Scripture. (e.g., Luke 15)
 2. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)
 3. Who is lost?
 - a. All have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23)
 - b. Those in sin have no hope. (Eph. 2:12)
 4. To be lost means to:
 - a. Have forfeited God's blessings of love, mercy and kindness.
 - b. Be without hope.
 - c. Have no true peace.
 - d. Only be able to anticipate eternal punishment.

II. What It Means to Be Involved in Religion — Acts 2

- A. Peter preached the first gospel sermon.
 1. He preached about Jesus. (vv. 22-35)

2. He proved Christ to be the Messiah. (v. 36)
 3. His sermon resulted in his listeners' recognition of their lost condition (v. 37) and their need for obedience. (vv. 38-40)
 4. This resulted in their involvement. (v. 41)
- B. There is more to religion than just primary obedience to the gospel.
1. They continued steadfast. (v. 42)
 - a. Sometimes involvement and interest dwindles at this point—some want only to be members, no more.
 - b. Baptism is not an end but a beginning. (John 3:5; Rom. 6:3-4)
 2. One must continue to be steadfast—strong towards, firm—in:
 - a. The Apostles' teaching.
 - b. Fellowship.
 - c. The breaking of bread.
 - d. Prayers.
- C. Being a follower of Christ is not a temporary or occasional thing.
1. It takes constant, active, faithful service unto God.
 2. There is no valid reason for not being involved.
 - a. "No one appreciates me. I can't have a leading role." (Acts 1:23; 15:22)
 - b. "The church is filled with hypocrites, sinners and other undesirables."
- D. Total involvement requires that we:
1. Be a living sacrifice—full consecration. (Rom. 12:1-2)
 2. Be active in the work of the Lord. What is your attitude? Is it one of:
 - a. Duty? "What must I do?"
 - b. Investigation? "What can I do?"
 - c. Willingness? "What shall I do?"
 3. Have transformed minds: from materialistic to spiritual.
 4. Have the desire to lead others to Christ. (Acts 26:29)

Conclusion: I Timothy 4:15-16

"Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."