

Colossians Complement #9

What Is Empty Religion?

A. Defining the terms:

- Religion – a set of beliefs and practices for worshipping God
- Empty – ineffective, without the expected content, pretentious, hypocritical

B. Examples in Scripture of warnings and clarifications about empty religion

Warning	Clarification
Colossians 2:8, 16-23	Colossians 2:6-7, 9-15; 3:1-17
Isaiah 1:10-15; 29:13; 66:3	Isaiah 66:1-2
Micah 6:6-7	Micah 6:8
Psalms 51:16	Psalms 51:6, 10, 17
James 1:25-26	James 1:27

C. Empty religion which keeps the lost from being saved

The attempt: for the sinner to become reconciled to God by performing religious acts

The result: failure

- Matthew 7:21-23
²¹“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. ²²Many 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?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

The clarification: by faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior, a sinner is saved

- Galatians 2:16
knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

D. Empty religion which keeps the saved from a God-pleasing walk

The attempt: for the saint to please God by performing religious acts

The result: failure

- Colossians 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.

The clarification: by faith in Jesus Christ, our hearts and minds are turned toward God, and as we depend on Him our lives will please God

- Colossians 3:1-17
¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above...

Discussion Questions

1. Which verse stood out to you tonight? Why?
2. Can you think of a foolish way that some unbelievers try to earn salvation?
3. Can you think of a way that believers might foolishly try to impress God?