

Empty Religion

In the Grip of Grace - 4

Disease is a great equalizer. A prominent businessman received the horrifying diagnosis that he had leukemia. Only surgery could raise the odds for complete recovery; but if the procedure failed, his life expectancy would be cut from months to days. It was sobering for him to realize that all his money, influence, and business acumen couldn't give him any more of an "edge" over the next person.

The same is true spiritually. A knowledge of the Bible, or time logged in a pew doesn't give a "believer" an edge over an "unbeliever." A religious heritage might provide one the opportunity to become better acquainted with God, but in the final analysis, all are guilty of sin. And God doesn't grade on a curve. Both religious and non-religious alike need the kind of radical heart surgery that only God can provide.

LOOKING BACK:

What were the "perks" of belonging to your family?

LOOKING DEEP:

Read Romans 3:1-2, 9

1. *What are the spiritual advantages of growing up with a religious heritage? What are the disadvantages? Would you consider yourself among the spiritual advantaged or disadvantaged?*
2. Religious people often fall into two traps--they put a lot of false confidence either in **knowledge** (Romans 2:17-24), or in **ritual** (Romans 2:25-29). *In what ways can either of these two areas make someone blind to their need for God? Have you tended to put wrong confidence in one or the other?*
3. "Sinful behavior isn't as much a problem as pride." *Would you agree? Explain.*
4. *What is the difference between "more" obedience and "deeper" obedience? (Jesus contrasted the two in Matthew 5, and summed it up by saying, "...unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (vs 20).*
5. *Why is it so important to come to a personal conviction of the truths expressed in Romans 3:19-20?*

*PRAYER REQUESTS
AND REFLECTIONS*