

RIGHTEOUSNESS, NOT RITUALISM!

Joe Slater

False worship characterized Israel (northern kingdom), but in some instances they followed what God said in the Mosaic Law. Three feasts were to be observed, sacrifices offered, and songs sung, accompanied by certain instruments. Why, then, would God say this:

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments” (Amos 5:21-23).

The Lord referred to the Feast of Tabernacles as a “sacred assembly” (Leviticus 23:36). The same is true of the Feast of Passover/Unleavened bread (Deuteronomy 16:8). Why then, would He despise what He ordained?

In Exodus 29:18, the burnt offering is called a “sweet aroma” (savor). So, why was God rejecting it?

The inspired prophet David organized singers and players of various instruments for divine worship in First Chronicles 15:16). Why did God call them “noise” and refuse to hear them?

We might guess that it was because they were not worshipping in Jerusalem with Aaronic priests (remember, this is the northern kingdom). While that is true, it isn’t the reason the Lord Himself gave:

“For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate” (Amos 5:12). Wicked conduct made worship mere ritualism! *“But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream”* (v. 24).

Feast days, burnt offerings, and instrumental music are not part of Christian worship. But acceptable worship still requires righteous behavior!

An Example of Great Faith

Fifty years ago I knew a fine Christian lady, Annie Lou, who still stands out in my mind. She was one of the greatest examples I have ever known of how Christians ought to face adversity. What made Annie Lou so different?

Sister Annie had a son, Billy, when she was in her early twenties. Billy was born with a mental problem, but was able to remain at home. About this time, Annie Lou developed a severe case of arthritis (the kind where your bones more or less turn to jelly). She became bedfast. Her husband left her, and she was faced with supporting herself and Billy.

She lived in a small apartment over a business. She owned the building and had some income from the rental of the space. She also used the telephone from her bed to sell magazines and other items. When Billy became older, he decided to help. He fixed a tray that hung about his neck, loaded it with shoestrings, pencils, etc., and walked the streets selling them. Together, they managed to survive.

Annie Lou was also a faithful Christian. Though bedfast, she seldom missed a service of the church. She built a hand-operated elevator outside the apartment so she could be lowered to the ground in her wheelchair. She also taught the principles of serving the Lord to Billy. One day while I was visiting her (I did this often to gain strength from her), Billy came in from a trip through the town selling his wares. He sat down at a table and began counting his money. He would count a few coins, place them in a pile, then take others and place them in a jar. Annie told me that the jar was his contribution jar. He put the money into it every time he came home so it would be ready for Sunday. He was afraid he would spend it all and not have it ready for the collection during services.

This sweet Christian lady didn’t think of herself as handicapped. She simply had a few more obstacles to overcome than most people. When I begin to feel discouraged, I think of Annie Lou and realize how richly I have been blessed. She has departed this life, but I am confident she has a home of peace and rest awaiting her in eternity. How much better this world would be if there were more Annie Lous!

--Jim Lundy (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*

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If We Work Upon Marble

If we work upon marble,

it will perish;

If upon brass,

time will efface it;

If we rear temples,

they will crumble into dust;

But if we work upon the immortal minds

And imbue them with the just fear of God

And love of our fellow-men,

We engrave on those tablets

Something that will brighten

to all eternity.

--Daniel Webster

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NEVER LOOK DOWN ON SOMEBODY . . .

UNLESS YOU’RE HELPING THEM UP.