

RELIGIOUS—BUT NOT RIGHTEOUS

By Keith Greer

“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” {2 Timothy 3:2-5} Paul warned that such folks appear to be religious, but in truth they are not. This condition may involve:

Zeal without knowledge. *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” {Romans 10:1-3}* Many so-called religious people have much zeal, and this is commendable. Mormon elders, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews, and even many in the Islam faith are full of zeal. Apollos was full of zeal, but he lacked proper knowledge {Acts 18:24-26}. It's dangerous when people are full of religious zeal that is not accompanied by the proper Bible knowledge. Such zeal is counterproductive. It leads more souls away from God than to Him! First and foremost, we must overcome our ignorance of “God's righteousness.”

Knowledge without zeal. *“They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” {Titus 1:16}* Too often, God's people fit into this category. Many Christians know the Bible and have a good storehouse of knowledge about God's truth; yet, they do not possess the zeal to share the message with those who most need it—the lost. Isn't it strange that some people who have false doctrine have more zeal than those of us who profess to have the truth? This is a tragic situation, both for the lost, and for those who have knowledge but do not share it with others. Barring a remedy, both will be lost!

Church membership without dedication. *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” {Matthew 6:33}* For many years, we've all heard preachers proclaim that “once saved always saved” is a false doctrine. And this is true. But from observing how some of these men live, I'm not sure they believe their own preaching! The fact that a person's name is on a local church's roll doesn't necessarily mean that his ticket to heaven is punched and recorded in stone. Members of Christ's body must be dedicated to His work, and it must occupy first place in their lives. Do you have such a mindset? What place does His work have in your life? Pew warmers are not effective workers in God's kingdom. He needs those who work—not sit {Matthew 9:37,38}.

Attendance—but not at all services. *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” {Hebrews 10:24,25}* Christians should understand that our attendance at the church's services tells others volumes about our commitment to Christ. True, it's not the only barometer, but it does emit a message about two things:
1. Love for the church. 2. Love for our brethren. We come together to praise and honor God and to

worship Him according to the pattern He gave us *{John 4:24}*. But we also come together to strengthen, edify, and encourage one another. How can this happen if we choose to be absent from any service?

Sadly, a claim to being religious is absolutely meaningless, unless we substantiate that claim with righteous living. Someone said it's better for people to see the truth lived than to hear it preached. Let us seek to live religiously and righteously before God and men. ***