

## Can “Religion” Save?

Fred R. Coulter—March 19, 1999

Greetings brethren! We are going to ask the question: *Can ‘religion’ save?* Before we get into it, here’s a very interesting article from the

*San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 1999: *Iranian Leader, Pope Find Common Ground in Rome*. (articles.sfgate.com)

Khatami... [leader of Iran] ...hails historic meeting as ‘promising day’. Vatican—In a landmark encounter of Christian and Islamic leaders, Pope John Paul II met yesterday with Mohammad Khatami, the moderate cleric who heads Iran’s theocratic government, and said their 25-minute discussion made for ‘an important, promising day.’ Khatami, a Shiite Muslim, told the Roman Catholic pontiff that he hopes the two monotheistic faiths could join to inspire a more equitable world order...

Now if you read the book: *Keys of This Blood: Pope John Paul II vs Russia and the West for Control of the New World Order*, by Malachi Martin about John Paul II’s plans for world domination; you’ll see that it falls right in line with it. A lot of people have been wondering when is it ever going to be that the Muslims and Catholics will get together. Well, here is one of the very first steps.

“The hope is for the victory of monotheism, of ethics, of morals together with peace and reconciliation...”

This sounds just almost exactly like what the Catholics are saying and what the ecumenical Protestants are saying. The truth is, once you leave God then you still want some kind of morals. You want some kind of ‘religion,’ but you don’t want the commandments of God, which says ‘Thou shalt’ or ‘Thou shalt not.’

“...ethics, morals, live together in peace and reconciliation,” the Iranian president said. “May God protect you.”

The papal audience was an endorsement of Khatami’s campaign for a “dialogue of civilizations” that would break Iran’s twenty-year isolation.

At the end of their talks, conducted through interpreters, one of the three clerics accompanying Khatami asked the pope in English, “May I do something?” Surprising everyone in the room, he kissed the pope on both cheeks.

I wonder what inspiration he had to do that? Makes you wonder—doesn’t it?

Khatami, 56, wore a gray clerical robe, a black cloak and the black turban signifying that he descends from the prophet Mohammed, founder of the faith that rivals Catholicism for the world’s biggest flock. Each religion claims just over 1-billion faithful.

The tall Iranian cleric and his stooped, white-robed host... [John Paul II] ...have much in common. Both studied philosophy, and both preach about the need for economic justice...

And, of course, John Paul’s economic justice is just one step away from communism.

...revival of spiritual values and tolerance among faiths. Speaking to European scholars Wednesday night, Khatami said, “All the divine religions are not quintessentially different.”

What he’s actually saying is that all the ‘religions’ are the same.

...Khatami’s visit had landmark significance for two reasons. One is Iran’s influence in the Islamic world, enhanced by the fact that Khatami is now president of the 55-nation Islamic Conference...

They are all coming home to Rome; all roads lead to Rome. That fits in very nicely, because ‘religion’ is going to unite all the ‘religions’ of the world on their common ground—the things that they do together—so that they can try and find world peace and that they can bring all men together. What’s going to happen? Is all of this ‘religious’ movement going to save them? *No! It’s going to destroy them!*

Will *or* can ‘religion’ save? I know that a lot of people are still wondering why I am attacking ‘religion.’ I’m not attacking ‘religion.’ I’m just pointing out the Truth of what’s in God’s Word.

In the world there are many ‘religious’ people, of many different faiths. Many of them in the societies and the countries where they live are upstanding citizens, law abiding. They do ‘good works’; they do many different things. The world recognizes those kinds of things as ‘good,’ a good influence. ‘Religion’ is a way where people can come together on their terms of what they believe, so

that they can worship God in the manner that they choose. That's what 'religion' is.

Let me read a definition of 'religion.' Someone sent this to me. As I read it, I want you to understand something that's very important. The English word *religion*—as we find in James 1—does not have the same meaning in the Greek that this *Webster's Exhaustive Dictionary* definition has. So as people view us, they will say, 'You are *religious*,' because anyone who believes in God has got to be 'religious,' as opposite of being an atheist or an agnostic. If you let people know you believe in God and Jesus Christ: What 'religion' do you belong to?

Webster's Exhaustive Dictionary:

1. A personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands, especially as found in accepted sacred writings and declared by authoritative teachers.

A personal commitment is something that the person does. *God's way* is more than a personal commitment. *It is a calling.*

2. It is a way of life...

Well, at least they have that part right, but the way of life that we follow is not *a way* of life, but the way that Jesus has laid down as *the Way*. He is *the Truth*. You see the subtle differences here. You could read this and think, 'Boy! Yes, we are a 'religion.' But as I have pointed out, you cannot find the word *Christian* and *religion* together in the New Testament, it just isn't there.

- Judaism is a 'religion'
- Catholicism is a 'religion'
- Protestantism is a 'religion'
- Mohammedism is a 'religion'

All those who have *their own* "faith" are 'religions.' But these 'religions' *will not* and *cannot save!* We'll show you that. That's the whole point I'm trying to make.

When God first calls us we automatically think in terms of 'religion.' Or if we have been in one church and God calls us out of that because we want to know the Truth of God, it isn't that you just change churches. It's not like going from the Lutheran to the Baptist or the Baptist to the Mormon or the Mormon to the Reorganized Mormon or leave that and go to the Buddhists, that's just changing 'religions.' And as he said, 'quintessentially all 'religions' are not different'—they are the same.

...Recognized as a way of life, recognized on incumbents as incumbent upon true believers... [they've got that one fairly

close] ...and typically the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers.

There is the social club! Pick out the church of your choice. Billy Graham says, 'Come to the Lord and then you go back home and you pick out a church that you'll be comfortable going to.' That is 'religion.' So, while they have one sentence in here that comes very close to the Truth, not one of them says the true believer in Jesus Christ, Who declared that He *is the Way, the Truth and the Life*—is there? *No!*

3. The state of a religious person... [it says nuns here] ...The state of a religious—the nun died in her 13<sup>th</sup> year of her vows or whatever.
4. One of the systems of faith and worship. A religious faith, monotheistic or tolerant of all religions. Forbidding discrimination because of race, color, or religion. The body of institutionalized expressions of sacred beliefs...

In other words, *the traditions*. This is all manmade. So out of the whole thing we have found one sentence that gets kind of close in the definition of 'religion.'

5. The observances and social practices found in a given culture in context for example, the religion of this primitive people... [they give] ...The profession or practice of religious beliefs, religious observances. "The colonel is of his practical belief was that it was respectable" and beneficial to one's business... [That's where most of it comes—merchandising.] ...to be seen going to services.

So all of these things define 'religion.' There are some other things here concerning 'religion.' Let me continue with some of the definitions here. They are very interesting.

6. A personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being...

Many people believe that. That's makes many people 'religious.'

...or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own humanity or all natures destiny... [Isn't that something?] ...The access of such an awareness or conviction accompanied by or arousing reverence, gratitude, humility, the will to obey and serve.

7. Religious experience or insight: A cause, principle, system of tenets, held with ardor, devotion in

conscientiousness and faith. A value held to be of supreme importance.

That could be almost anything. You could make ‘religion’ almost anything.

8. A quality, condition, custom or thing inspiring zealous devotion. Conscientious maintenance and cherishing of the religion.
9. Synonyms include: faith, church, creed, communion, denomination, sect, cult, persuasion. Religion is a general term, especially applicable to the great religions and the larger subdivisions; among their believers the Christian religion, Roman Catholic, Methodist religion. Faith is applicable to any formulated and established major religious group. It may or may not suggest ardent, complete acceptance such as you could have the Mohammedan faith, the Mormon faith, men of all faiths; churches likely to stress existence of a formed organization and procedure. It may suggest a Christian rather than non-Christian context. Creeds differ from faith in more strongly suggested formal doctrinal expressions of what is believed...

That broad definition has no meaning or relevance to James 1. Let’s just review that. I think it’s important for us to understand that James was writing, as I have said several times, to a combination of those who are converted, newly converted, unconverted, those who were just in synagogue.

James 2:20: “But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?....

He says, v 19: “...Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons believe—and tremble *in fear*.” He’s really not talking to too many converted people here in this case, because if they were converted they would already know that.

He says over here in the first part of James 2 that if you break one of the commandments, you have broken them all. Well, if you are truly converted you understand that. What James was trying to do—he was dealing with the Zealots, and of course, a lot of the Zealots though they profess Jesus later turned away in the rebellion against Rome and were killed and destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem. So they weren’t converted.

Concerning ‘religion,’ James 1:26: “If anyone among you considers himself to be

religious... [‘threskos’—in this sense a ‘religious’ person is a ‘threskos’] ...and does not control his tongue, but deceived his own heart, this one’s religion *is* vain.... [that’s clear] ...Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (vs 26-27).

There are a lot of people out in the world who consider themselves ‘keeping themselves unspotted from the world,’ in drinking and carousing and all of those things. People can do that who are not converted, but too many of the problems and difficulties that we’ve all had in the Church is that it was made into a ‘religion’ rather than into what God really wanted. That’s why God had to deal with the Church just as He dealt with Job. There are some very important and profound things that we need to learn from the book of Job. That’s a long, long book with many, many lessons in it.

Let’s go to Ephesians 2:8 and let’s answer the question right away: Can a ‘religion’ save? *No!* God alone can save and Jesus Christ is Savior. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves... [It doesn’t come from yourself. It’s not from a personal commitment, though you must have a personal **covenant pledge** to God. That is greater than a personal commitment. Your personal commitment to God as a true Christian runs far deeper than a personal commitment. It is a **covenant pledge**.] ...*it is* the gift of God.” If it is the gift of God then it cannot be earned. All ‘religions’ have an earning works formula.

- If you do *good* you will go to heaven.
- If you do *bad* you will go to purgatory or hell.
- If you do not take the sacraments of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, you do not have salvation.
- If you do not do the hail Marys and our fathers and attend Christmas and Easter and all of that sort of thing with their ‘religion,’ you have no salvation.
- If you don’t come to church on Sunday you don’t have salvation.

The thing is; all of those are human mechanisms designed to control people, to keep them in the organized group, to keep them in the organized ‘religion’ for the sake of power and control. That’s what the pope is doing in the world, in everything he can get his hands on, and all of his agents.

- they’re very *religious*
- they’re very *devout*
- they’re very *pious*

- they’re very *zealous*

They know what they are doing. They’re out to *destroy the true faith* of Jesus Christ and that means that they’re out to destroy what you really truly believe. I think it’s about time that we go to God and we ask God for some:

- faith
- zeal
- energy
- drive
- dedication to God

—and quit all of our silly little bickering over ‘religions.’ We just need to do that. The time has come that it’s got to stop!

“...*it is* the gift of God... [You are not going to be saved by ‘religion.’ **God alone gives it to you as a gift!**] ...Not of works, so that no one may boast” (vs 8-9). So it’s not of any works that you can do. There is no such thing as an account chart with your name on it in heaven, where your name is there and listed over here on this side the good deeds, listed over here on this side are the bad deeds. If you have more good deeds than bad deeds, you’re going to make it. *Not so!* You have to have a complete covenant relationship with God. If you do then you have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you so that everything is the *works of Christ*.

Verse 10: “For we are **His workmanship**... [God is working with us] ...created in Christ Jesus... [**Salvation is creation**. God doesn’t want us to be just good sincere people in the world. He wants us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and being and to live *His way* and to love Jesus Christ, with His Spirit, let Him put the mind of Christ in us. That’s very important for us to understand that.] ...created in Christ Jesus unto *the good works*... [these are the **true good works** of love and faith and hope] ...that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them.” Of course, that has to do with commandment-keeping, no question about it. But commandment-keeping is not where it ends. Commandment-keeping is where it **begins**, because God has called us to this covenant relationship.

Let’s go to John 6 so that we understand this covenant relationship. You have to be called of God. It is a special, Divine, individual act by God the Father **to you as a person**. The calling of God comes from the greatest Supreme Being in the universe—God the Father. He’s not calling you to a religion.’ He’s calling you to a relationship with Him and to be in the **Family of God**, but that is going to take a **covenant commitment**.

John 6:44: “No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.... [The Father has got to draw

you. The **Father works in your life and in your mind to call you**. Then it’s up to you to respond and repent.] ...It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’... [Whose doing the teaching then? *God is!* I can read the words, you can read the words, but it’s *God’s Spirit in your mind* that does the teaching and gives you understanding. That’s what’s really happening.] ...Therefore, everyone who has heard... [you have to hear and answer] ...from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me” (vs 44-45).

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, ‘I am **the Way**, and **the Truth**, and **the Life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me.’” So no one can get to Jesus except through the Father and no one can come to the Father except through Jesus and that is *very clear*. This is not a ‘religious’ endeavor that takes place. He brings us to the point that we repent of our sins and we are baptized.

Let’s understand what our dedication to God is. It is a **covenant death**. That’s important. You have to completely die to Christ. Romans 6:3: “Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were **baptized into His death?**” You’re co-joined with His death. You have pledged to God, by the very act of baptism and being co-joined to the death of Jesus Christ, that you will follow Jesus Christ and God the Father. **That is not a religion!** This is covenant between you and God. Moreover, in being joined to His death, Jesus Christ—to make it possible—died for your sins and eventually the sins of the whole world. So you die to sin indeed when you are buried in the watery grave of baptism.

Verse 4: “Therefore, we were buried with Him by baptism into death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the dead* by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of *His resurrection*” (vs 4-5).

Brethren, that is a great calling. That is a marvelous thing to realize and understand. That’s why God has not called you to a ‘religion.’ And ‘religion’ **can’t save**. Even the very best, most pure, most undefiled ‘religion’ **cannot save**. It may look good to the world. It may look to other people. You may be counted a very ‘righteous’ person in the eyes of some people, but it **cannot save**; only Jesus Christ can.

Verse 6: “Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him*...” Do you figure that you have been crucified? Do you? Do you consider yourself that dead; that you were crucified with Christ, the old person before baptism? That’s what

it’s all about. Those who really do not understand that—they are ‘religious’ people and they may even be amongst some of the brethren of God in whatever Church of God it may be. The sins of the Churches in Rev. 2 and 3 were sins where they went away from God to ‘religion.’ Did Christ not have a lot of very stern things to say to them because of their sins? *No doubt about it.*

“...in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (v 6). Sin originates in the mind. We’re to be converted and have the mind of Christ. And the *exterior* things of ‘religion’ or ‘threskeia’ *cannot*, with these outward works, *cleanse the inside*. Matt. 23 shows how ‘religion’ leads to destruction. We’re going to see in this one, who is the founder of ‘religion’ and it *is not God!* It just is not.

Let’s see what God has *called us to*. He has called us to a family relationship: *He is our Father! We are His children!* We are not Christians in a ‘religion.’ We are only Christian in identifying that we are following Christ, that’s all. We are actually the Church of the Firstborn, the harvest of the firstfruits. Therefore, all of this ‘religious’ connotation that people bring in because that’s all they’re used to if you were brought up in the Baptist Church or the Methodist Church or Presbyterian or Catholic, you had certain things that you did. You even read from the Bible. You even studied the Bible in many cases. But all of that, being as it is, *isn’t going to save* unless you believe and are called and are converted and receive the Spirit of Christ. That’s what’s so important.

Romans 8:9: “...But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” Do you believe that? Do you understand that? To whom does God give His Holy Spirit? *To those that obey Him* (Acts 5:32) *and to those that love Him!* The only way that you are going to truly have a relationship with God and fellowship with God is if you truly love Him, because you know that Christ died for you. You have joined in this covenant death with Christ for the marvelous opportunity to be the very sons and daughters of God.

1-John 3:1: “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us...” He gave it to us. The very fact that we love God, brethren, comes from God’s Holy Spirit, that we can do it. Of and by ourselves we do not have the love that is necessary to love God spiritually, but God gives that to us.

“...that we should be called the children of God!...” In this case, the children of God, the ‘teknon’—His own begotten offspring. Do you realize that? That God the Father Himself has begotten you in the spirit of your mind for a great and a marvelous purpose that no ‘religion’ of this

world can possibly understand? Because they only selectively choose some of the things that *they want to do* or they take the Scriptures and cleverly twist and turn them to fit their own traditions and their own pagan philosophies and whatever.] ...For this very reason, the world does not know us...”

That’s important to understand. Most of the ‘religions’ in the world are coming together in a whole united religious movement that is taking place. And they don’t know God. Satan is going to be right there and perform many, many miracles and *all* the ‘religious’ people—all of those who do not have the Spirit of God and actively use the Spirit of God to grow in grace and knowledge—are going to be deceived because they *don’t love the Truth*. That day is coming. If you think that going through trials and difficulties *now* are difficult, brethren, I don’t think we have a clue as to what is going to happen down the road and how bad and serious it’s going to be. We may in fact have to really give our lives indeed. That’s why with a covenant pledge of baptism, conjoined into the death of Jesus Christ, we have already committed ourselves to death. That’s something we need to realize.

Verse 2: “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is.” That’s something, brethren! We need to realize that. God has called us to a greater, *greater, greater* thing than just keeping the Commandments and keeping the Holy Days! Those are all fundamental and required. Please don’t let anyone misunderstand, and please don’t think I’m trying to put those down. Please don’t think that I’m trying to say, because you have religiously kept these for years and did a lot of good works during the Feast or whatever, that now I’m putting you down. I’m not. I’m just saying that it isn’t going to work in saving you.

Let’s look at something here. This is the commitment that we are to make. This is what God wants us to do. This is how the pledge—it’s not just a personal commitment—you have laid your life to death. That’s what you have done, to live to God. Jesus makes this very clear. We will see this when we get to the book of Job.

Luke 14:26: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he **cannot** be My disciple.... [the Greek there is ‘ou adunatai’—*the impossibility of any power of making you a true disciple of Jesus Christ.*] ...And whoever does not carry his cross... [Because you have been crucified with Christ or whatever difficulty that comes along.] ...and come

after Me cannot be My disciple” (vs 26-27). ‘Oudunatai,’ and we’re going to see that’s what Job had to learn. Job did not understand that. Job did not realize that. Job was very religious we’ll see.

Let’s look here at another ‘religious’ man. Luke 18:18: “And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except one—God. You know the commandments: “You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother.” And he said, ‘I have kept all these *commandments* from my youth.’ And after hearing these things, Jesus said to him, ‘You still lack one thing; sell everything that you have, and distribute to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow Me” (vs 18-21). He wasn’t willing to really give up. He wasn’t really willing to die that covenant death with Christ.

Verse 23: “But when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful; for he was quite rich. Now when Jesus saw him become so sorrowful, He said, ‘How difficult *it is for* those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! For it is easier *for* a camel to go through an eye of a needle than *for* a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.’ And those who heard *this* said, ‘Who then is able to be saved?’ But He said, ‘The things *that are* impossible with men are possible with God” (vs 23-27).

Here is something to understand in commandment-keeping. Remember the certain ruler said, ‘Lord, I’ve done this all my life.’ He did all of those things. They are required for salvation, no doubt about it! But he was not willing to totally let himself die in Christ.

Luke 17:5: “Then the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ But the Lord said, ‘If you had faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you might say to this sycamine tree, “Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,” and it would obey you. But which of you having a servant plowing or shepherding will immediately say *to him when* he comes in from the field, “Come and sit down *and eat*”? Rather, will he not say to him, “Prepare what I may eat, and gird yourself, *and* serve me while I eat and drink; and afterwards you may eat and drink”? Is he thankful to that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? **I think not**” (vs 5-9). Here is a statement that so very few people can really understand.

Verse 10: “Likewise **you** also, when you have done **all the things that are commanded** you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do.’”

‘Religion’ has taken all of the things that are duty to do and they’ve wrapped it up in their ‘religious’ things and their traditions and so forth, and that cuts them off from progressing. Even ‘pure and undefiled religion’ **cannot save you**.

Let’s go back to Job 1 and let’s understand something that’s very important for us to realize. People have wondered why the book of Job It is 42 chapters long and it has some of the most incredible arguments based upon all of the philosophical reasonings of the world. And **all** the major world’s ‘religious’ philosophies are contained in here and spoken by Job and the three friends that came to him.

Now, Job *in the letter* was perfect. Even God said so, but there’s one thing that’s very important to understand in this. **God is interested in the heart!** A person might ask and say, ‘Well, why did God have all these things done to Job? Why do it to someone who is perfect?’ *Well, the truth is, in heart Job was not perfect!* Something happens when people become ‘religious’ and do good works. **They get self-righteous!** The hardest, *hardest, hardest* things, brethren, to repent’ of are all the self-righteous ‘do-gooding that a person has done. Because you have done good to help someone and that did do some good, but the question is: Did it save? **No!** Job did not understand that.

Let’s begin here in Job 1:1: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job. And that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and turned aside from evil.... [You think in today’s world you can’t get any better than that. Does that save? Will it save?] ...And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters. And his possessions also were seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and a very great household, so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east” (vs 1-3).

That’s something to understand—isn’t it? As I’m reading all of this I want you to remember what we just read in Luke 14. ‘If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and brother and sister and lands and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.’ In all of this, God is going to bring Job to a Luke 14:26 situation where he really sees himself, because Job figured he was pretty perfect. We’re going to see that. The one sin that Satan can never understand is the sin of self-righteousness, because he himself is self-righteous. Satan is a ‘stealth’ god. That’s going to be something for all of us to learn.

Verse 4: “And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each one on his day.... [We don’t know

exactly what this means. We don't know if these were feasts to the *true* God or whether these were birthday parties or these were feasts to other gods. We don't know, it doesn't say.] ...And they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And when the days of feasting were concluded, Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job continually did so” (vs 4-5).

That's generally indicating something here that they weren't doing right. Apparently they were doing something that wasn't right. Maybe they were worshipping other gods, so he's trying to atone for them. And here's a lesson: You can't atone for someone else. You can pray for them, but they have to be responsible for their own lives. That's what he did.

Verse 6: “Now, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD. And Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro in the earth... [He's as a roaring lion going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour, as the Apostle Peter wrote.] ...and from walking up and down in it’ And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil?’.... [Just the kind that Satan's looking for.] ...And Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” (vs 6-9).

*He's got benefits. He only does it because he's getting something out of it. And most 'religions' try and offer you something—don't they? You get a benefit! God wants to give you more than benefits. He wants to give you eternal life.*

Verse 10: “‘Have You not made a hedge around him, and around his house, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.’” All true statements. God never denied it. This shows that for ‘religious’ people who do things and ‘pure and undefiled religion’, there are certain blessings that come. **Does it save? No!**

Verse 11: “But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.” Job had some deep lessons to learn here. God knew what He was doing. God knew that the time had come that Job had to graduate from being one who was *pure and undefiled* in ‘religion’

to becoming someone who has a relationship with God. All of his goodness and all the things that he did, he never came to that. God said, ‘All right, Satan I'm going to *use you* for that.’

Verse 12: “And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has *is* in your power. Only do not lay your hand upon him.’ And Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. Now there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And there came a messenger to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing, and the donkeys feeding beside them. And the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away. Yea, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.’ While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, ‘The fire of God has fallen from the heavens and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and destroyed them. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.’ While he *was* still speaking, there also came *another* and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands and swooped down upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and have killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.’ While he *was* still speaking...” (vs 12-18).

Here's trial after trial—BAM! BAM! BAM!—taking everything that he had, because he was looking to those things.

Verse 18: “While he *was* still speaking, there also came another and said, ‘Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. And, behold, a great wind came from the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead. And I only have escaped alone to tell you.’ And Job arose, and tore his robe and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed *be* the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin, nor charge God foolishly” (vs 18-22).

But he didn't know it was just starting. That was quite a thing! ‘Religious’ people can do things like that—can't they? There was something he did to show his grief, to show what he was willing to do.

Job 2:1: “And again it came to pass on a day that the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD. And Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ And Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.’ And the LORD said unto Satan, ‘Have you

considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil? And still he is holding fast to **his** integrity... [it is not God’s integrity, but *Job’s*.] ...although you moved Me against him to destroy him without cause.” (vs 1-3). That is on the surface.

Verse 4: “And Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life.... [That’s the motto of the AMA. You can believe that.] ...But indeed put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.’ And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life.’ And Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. And he took a broken piece of pottery to scrape himself with. And he sat down among the ashes” (vs 4-8).

That was so bad the only way to deal with it was just to take a potsherd, that’s like a cut glass, and just scrape and cut the top of these boils off and let the pus ooze out and in all the pain, just squeeze it and let the pus drip. He had it all from his head to his feet. I don’t know of anyone that I’ve ever met who has had anything close to that kind of pain. Sore boils, maybe like carbuncles all over, you know those deep things that really hurt. He *sat down among the ashes!* The reason is when you put ashes all over you, that dries it up, because it pulls all the pus out. Here is Job—I don’t imagine his hair had grown out very much since he shaved it the first time—now covered with boils from head to toe, sitting down, throwing ashes on himself and scraping himself, and just trying to ease himself of the pain.

Verse 9: “And his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold to your integrity?... [You’re a hypocrite. You can just hear it. So much for Mrs. Job! That’s the first and last we heard of her! She probably ran off and hid and stayed away from it all.] (but notice her advice): ...Curse God and die!’... [you’re better off dead] ...But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speak. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (vs 9-10). Now it’s getting to his lips.

Verse 11: “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, and they each one came from his own place: Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had met together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and did not recognize him, they lifted up their voice and wept. And each one tore his robe, and *they* threw dust upon their

heads toward heaven. And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights. And no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great” (vs 11-13).

Seven days and seven nights just sitting there; scraping and ashes. You know what’s going to happen? Guess what attracts flies? *Pus and blood!* There were flies coming around. I imagine he was waving to chase away the flies. Later on he says, ‘Though worms destroy this body...’ What was he referring to? *Maggots in his flesh!* His friends were really not very much of a comfort.

Job 3:1: “After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his *birth*.”

Verse 25: “‘For the thing which I greatly feared has come upon me... [At least he’s being honest here. In all of his righteousness he still had fear—didn’t he? Perfect love casts out fear—doesn’t it? Did Job have perfect love? *No!*] ...and that which I was afraid of has come to me.’” Now then, three friends started giving him advice. All kinds of advice back and forth, ‘Job, come on admit it, you’re a sinner. You’re a wicked man.’ *No, I’m not.* ‘Yes, you are.’

Job 9:1: “And Job answered and said, ‘Truly I know *it is so*, but how can man be just with God? If he desired to argue with Him, he cannot answer Him one time out of a thousand *times*. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. Who has hardened *himself* against Him and has prospered’” (vs 1-4). So, he started out with wisdom—didn’t he? But later he even went against that.

He starts complaining to God, and this is one that really shows the problem, v 32: “‘For *He* is not a man, as I *am*, that I should answer Him, that we should come together in court; there is no umpire between us, *who* might lay his hand upon us both’” (vs 32-33).

What happens when you have self-righteousness? And that self-righteousness is destroyed? *Well, you really don’t know what to do!* You don’t want to curse God, because you are righteous enough to know you ought not to do that, and Job didn’t do that. But you’re bitter enough about it that you wish there were someone there that could put his hand on God and on you and really work the matter out. What it really comes down to is that in the final analysis, in all of this, ***self-righteousness is the hardest thing to see and to repent of***, because self-righteousness has been so good.

Job 13:15: “Though He slay me, I will trust in Him... [This sounds like Peter. ‘Lord, I’ll go to the death with you.’ Remember that? The Lord said, ‘Yeah, no you won’t. You’ll deny Me three times before this night is out.’] ...but I will maintain my



own ways before Him .... [*I was right!*] ...He also is my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before Him” (vs 15-16). ‘Look, I’m not a hypocrite, all you guys with your arguments and telling me all this sort of thing. I haven’t sinned. I haven’t done wrong. I maintain my right.’

Verse 17: “Listen carefully to my words, and to my declarations with your ears. Behold now, I have set *my* cause in order; I know that I shall be justified. Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die. Only do not do two *things* to me; then I will not hide myself from You. Withdraw Your hand far from me, and let not Your dread terrify me. Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and You answer me” (vs 17-22). He’s kind of laying down the terms here to God—isn’t he? That won’t work that way. You can’t lay down terms to God.

Verse 23: “**How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.** Why do You hide Your face, and reckon me as Your enemy?” (vs 23-24). Those are pretty strong words against God. He’s challenging God to come and show him his sins.

What I want you to do is read all the way through the book of Job. You’re going to see that even some of the very arguments that the three friends in Job used, *you have used*. And the reason being is that you haven’t quite yet graduated out of religion into a relationship with God. Read the whole thing. When I first read it, I really thought God was wrong, because I was just newly baptized and just starting. I thought I’ll read the book of Job. Why would God do that to a perfect man? Why would He go through this? Look at all the things that he did. I looked at my life and I had to admit my life was nothing like Job’s. How could Job be counted a sinner? Look at all the things that he did.

Job 29:1: “And Job continued speaking, and said, ‘Oh, that **I** were as *in* months past, as *in* the days when God watched over **me**; when His lamp shined upon **my** head; and when **I** walked *through* darkness by His light; as **I** was in the days of **my** youth, when the secret of God was upon **my** tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with **me**, and my children were around **me**; when **I** washed my steps with butter, and the rock pressed out rivers of oil for **me**; when **I** went out to the gate of the city; when **I** prepared **my** seat in the square! The young men saw **me** and hid themselves; and the aged arose and stood up. The rulers refrained from talking, and laid their hands on their mouths” (vs 1-9).

Here’s mighty Job walking in, the very important man! Everyone stopped in *hush* as the righteous, perfect Job passed by.

Verse 10: “. The noble’s voice was subdued, and their tongue clung to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard **me** then it blessed **me**.... [Oh, Job that was so good!] ...And when the eye saw **me** it gave witness to **me**.... [Right on Job!] ...For **I** delivered the poor who cried for help...” (vs 10-12). Does this not relate to James 1, ‘pure and undefiled religion’? *Yes!* Job was the purest and most undefiled in his religion, but he didn’t have a relationship with God.

- he knew of God
- he feared God
- he kept His commandments

—but *he did not have a relationship with God*. He was trusting in his own goodness, even though they are the Commandments of God. Do you understand? ***No human being with the ‘law of sin and death’ within him or her, is ever capable of being spiritually perfect.*** Job was not spiritually perfect. He was *carnally perfect*. He was *religiously perfect*. Did it save him? *No!* What saved him? We’ll see when we get a little further on.

Verse 12: “For I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who *had* none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.... [He did James 1:25 just as the best as can be! Better than James ever thought it could be done.] ...I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice *was* like a robe and a diadem.... [that gave me authority and great stature] ...I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I *was* a father to the poor; and the cause which I did not know, I searched out” (vs 12-16). He was so righteous; he went out and searched out for things that were wrong so he could make them right. That’s something—isn’t it?

Verse 17: “I broke the fangs of the wicked, and plucked the prey out of his teeth.” Yes, as a reigning monarch—the greatest of anyone in the East country—he went out and he took care of the wicked people. ‘Yes, I’m ‘religious’; I got rid of them.’

Verse 18: “Then I said, ‘I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply *my* days like the sand.’” In other words, he’s going to just fix everything up really nice. When it comes time for him to die, he’s going to die in his nest. It isn’t going to be a tragedy. It isn’t going to be anything wrong. It’s going to be perfect because I’m going to make it perfect.

Verse 19: “My root *was* spread out to the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory *was* fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. They listened to me, and waited, and kept silent at my counsel.... [none could do better than Job] ...After my words they did not speak

again; and my speech dropped on them. And they waited for me like the rain; and they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.... [Just ‘*Ahh!*’ Drinking it all in when they heard Job speak.] ...I smiled on them *when* they did not believe; and the light of my countenance they did not cast down. I chose out their way, and sat as chief; and I lived like a king in the army, as one *who* comforts the mourners” (vs 12-25). I tell you what—*you talk about being ‘righteous’!*

Job 31:5: “**If** I have walked with vanity... [He just spoke vanity! Just like the young man said, ‘I’ve done all these things from my youth up.’ Jesus said, ‘All right, go sell everything that you have.’ In this case Job didn’t sell it, God took it—same thing.] ...or **if** my foot has hurried to deceit... [here he is deceiving himself with his own goodness. That’s what’s so hard to see! **When you are good, what do you have to repent of? *The self and your evil nature!***] ...let me be weighed in an even balance...” (vs 5-6). Yes, because he thought of the good works/bad works thing. He said, ‘let me be weighed in an even balance and all those good works will just pull it right up good, God.’

“...so that God may know that I am blameless. If my step has turned out of the way, or my heart has walked after my eyes, and if any spot has cleaved to my hands; *then* let me sow, and let another eat; and let my harvests be rooted out. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have laid wait at my neighbor’s door, *then* let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down upon her. For that *would be* a heinous crime; yea, it *would be* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judges” (vs 5-11). On and on and on—I tell you it was something!

Here’s Job’s plea, v 35: “‘Oh, that I had one to hear me!.... [You three friends out there, you’re not listening to me.] ...Behold, my desire is *that* the Almighty would answer me, and the indictment *that* my adversary had written.... [He got both! God did answer him and it’s written in a book. Here it is.] ...Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, *and* bind it *like* a crown *upon* my head. I would declare to Him the number of my steps...” (vs 35-37). I would show God what I did. ‘Look God, I did this, and I did this and I did this and God I am a perfect human being.’ But you still have sinful nature and all the good that was done, was done out of sheer pride and self-righteousness.

“...like a prince I would come before Him.... [I would walk right up to God.] ...If my land cry against me, or its furrows weep together; if I have eaten its strength without paying for it, or have caused its owners to lose their life, let thorns come forth instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley.’ The words of Job are ended” (vs 37-40).

After that, what can you say?

Job 32:1: “And these three men ceased to answer Job, because **he was righteous in his own eyes**.... [Now we have something that we need to look at. Someone always let’s you know the truth] ...Then was kindled the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. His wrath burned against Job, because he had justified himself rather than God. Also his wrath was kindled against his three friends, because they had found no answer and *yet* had condemned Job” (vs 1-3). When you come to the end of it, when Job had to offer sacrifices for himself and his three friends, he didn’t have to offer it for Elihu.

Verse 4: “Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they *were* older than he in days. When Elihu saw that there *was* no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, ‘I *am* young, and you *are* very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not show you my opinion. I said, “The aged should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom.” But *there is* a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding. Great men are not *always* wise... [Very profound!] ...neither do the aged understand justice. Therefore I say, “Hearken to me. I also will declare my opinion.”’” (vs 4-10).

Verse 18: “For I am full of the matter; the spirit within me constrains me.... [v 21]: ...Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.”

Job 33:8: “Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of *your* words, *saying*, ‘I *am* pure, without transgression; I *am* innocent, and *there is* no iniquity in me’” (vs 8-9). That’s what he heard Job say.

Verse 12: “Behold, *in* this you are not right; I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you fight against Him? For He does not give account for *any* of His matters” (vs 12-13). That is, to any man.

Job 34:1: “And Elihu answered and said, ‘Hear my words, O you wise men; and give ear to me, you who have knowledge; for the ear tries words, *as* the palate tastes food. Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us know among ourselves what *is* good. For Job has said, “I am righteous; but God has denied me justice; should I lie against my right? My wound cannot be cured; *I am* without transgression.” What man *is* like Job, *who* drinks up scorning like water; Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men? For he has said, “It profits a man nothing when he delights himself in God.” Therefore, hearken to me, O you

men of understanding; far be it from God to commit iniquity; and from the Almighty, *that He should commit* iniquity. For the work of a man shall He render unto him, and cause every man to find according to *his* ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment” (vs 1-12).

Verse 35, Elihu continues: “Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words *were* without wisdom. My desire *is that* Job may be tried unto the end because *his* answers *are* like those of wicked men. For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps *his* hands among us, and multiplies his words against God” (vs 35-37).

Job 35:1: “And Elihu answered and said, ‘Do you think this to *be* right, you *that* say, “My righteousness *is* more than God’s”? For you say, “What advantage will it be to You? What profit shall I have, more than *if* I had sinned?” I will answer your words, and your companions with you. Look to the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds; they are higher than you. If you sin, what do you do against Him? Or *if* your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?” (vs 1-7).

Verse 12: “There they cry, but He gives no answer, because of the pride of evildoers. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.” (vs 12-13). What is he referring to? What is the vainest thing possible? *Religion that claims to save!* That is vanity and self-righteousness is vanity. Elihu kept going on. He went on for another whole two chapters, showing Job about his self-righteousness, and finally God answered.

Job 38:1: “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Who *is* this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now, gird up your loins like a man; for I will demand of you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare it, if you have understanding! Who has determined its measurements, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it? On what are the foundations fastened to? Or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’” (vs 1-7). Pointing to the creation.

Job 40:1—I want you to read everything else in between. “And the LORD answered Job and said, ‘Shall he who contends with the Almighty instruct *Him*?.... [Is anyone going to instruct the *heart-knowing* God?] ...He who reproves God, let him answer it.’” (vs 1-2). *Come on Job, answer!*

Verse 3: “And Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer You? I

will lay my hand on my mouth.... [He finally learned how to—*time to shut up.*] ...Once I have spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.’” (vs 3-5). Here’s the whole core of everything to do with ‘religion’ and why ‘religious’ works—even the most pure and undefiled ‘religious’ works, the *exterior* ‘religious’ works that you do cannot save.

Verse 6: “And the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, ‘Gird up your loins now like a man. I will demand you, and you declare unto Me. Will you even annul My judgment?....’” (vs 6-8). Every single ‘religion’ does it.

- they have their traditions
- they have their own commandments
- they have their own rules and regulations.
- they declare that the Sabbath is not right, but Sunday is
- they have disannulled the judgment of God

“...Will you condemn Me so that you may be righteous?” (v 8). Isn’t that what religionists and theologians do? *‘Well, God gave the Sabbath and His commandments because they were harsh and God just wanted to punish them. But we are righteous and sweet and good and have grace and love,’* and all of this cloyed stickiness of self-righteousness.

Verse 9: “And *have* you an arm like God?.... [In other words, if you are going to condemn Me, are you God? That’s what He’s saying.] ...Or can you thunder with a voice like His?.... [Job you think you are so good. There he is with all the pus and scabs and flies and ashes, everything all over him.] ...Deck yourself now with majesty and excellency, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of your wrath; and behold everyone who is proud, and abase him. Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and* bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; *and* bind their faces in darkness. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you” (vs 9-14).

‘Religion’ *cannot save*. Your own self-righteousness *cannot save*. That is all required. When you have done everything that is commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants.’ God wants us to go above and beyond that by not pushing ourselves up, but by yielding ourselves to God and asking for His Spirit and asking for His love and entering into a relationship with God, because God alone can save us.

Let’s come over here to Job 42. Are you willing to repent of your ‘religious’ self-righteousness? That’s the reason that this whole controversy got started over a sermonette that Bob

Hunnicut gave where he said that God hates religion. God does hate religion. Look at all the perfectness of Job.

- Did it save? *No!*
- Did it do some good out here? *Yes!*
- But how quickly can all that be taken away? *BAM! Just like that!*

So God took it away. He had none of the physical things around that *he* could build himself up with and say, 'Look, I did this and I did that' and so forth.

Job 42:1: "And Job answered the LORD and said, 'I know that You can do all things, and *that* no thought can be withheld from You. *You asked, "Who is he who hides counsel without knowledge?"*.... [Job is talking to himself, about himself.] ...Therefore, I have spoken that which I did not understand..." (vs 1-3). He said, 'I spoke with no understanding.' If you want to retain a religion,' though you may call it Christian, you do not have understanding. You need the understanding of God.

"...*things* too wonderful for me; yea, which I did not know. Hear, I beseech You, and I will speak; *You said*, "I will ask of you, and you will declare to Me." I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear... [That's what 'religion' is: You hear of God by the hearing of the Word.] ...**but now my eye sees You**" (vs 3-5).

To see the true perspective, here is Job repenting, and he had to repent of all the good that he did. Was it hard? *Yes!* Men couldn't convince him to repent, but when God dealt with him personally, God led him to repentance. And it's the same thing with us. The graciousness of God leads us to repentance. Oh, you did good things in the past, that's fine! That's all expected.

- Do you love God?
- Have you totally repented to Him?
- Do you understand that the human heart is deceitful above all things, even in its own goodness?

Verse 6: "Therefore, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes."

Then when that happened, Job was healed. God blessed him. He had to offer the offerings for them—those three friends—but not for Elihu. Of all of the people that were there with Job, only one man understood that God is so great and marvelous and supreme, that our righteousness, as Isaiah has said, is just like 'filthy rags.' We stand before God and try and hold those up to Him. It's the same as Job arguing with God and saying, 'God, I have done so good, You just got to come down here and

I'm going to convince You of what I have done. How good I am.' So he had to repent.

- Can you repent of your 'religious' things?
- Can you repent of making a 'religion' out of God's way?
- Can you change and really see that there is **the way of God** that you have to follow with all your heart, mind, soul and being?

That's what it's all about, brethren. **'Religion' cannot save! It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ!**

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

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- 15) Job 9:1-4, 32-33
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- 19) Job 32:1-10, 18, 21
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