

Formalism: What It Is and Isn't

Romans 2.25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

* The reason so many Jews were rejecting the gospel was ...

* The two fundamental sins of the Gentiles were ... and the two fundamental sins of the Jews were ...

* These sins made Jews need what kind of savior?

* Why is formalism relevant to us today?

* What is formalism, basically?

* What are some verses that condemn formalism?

* It would be easy for us to conclude that formalism is just a matter of ... and that the way to avoid formalism is to ...

* What's wrong with trying to eliminate the outer to emphasize the inner?

* What do we learn about what formalism is and isn't in the following Scriptures?

— "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mat 15.8).

— Matthew 21.18-19, where Jesus curses a fig tree for having only leaves and no fruit.

— "Every tree is known by its own fruit. ... A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things I say?" (Luke 6.44-46).

* Four principles:

1) Formalism is not a ... problem; it's a ... problem.

2) Formalism is not an ... problem; it involves ...

3) You cannot fix a lack of ... by getting rid of ...

4) Formalism usually involves ..., not ... (Mat 15.9).

* What did this look like in Jesus' day?

* What does it look like in our day?

* How are the two the same?

* True fruit always involves ...