

## FORMALISM

Amos 5:21-27

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Formalism: "The exact and scrupulous observance of outward forms and conventional usages, especially in religious duties." Webster
- B. Israel was worshipping: offering burnt offerings, meat offerings, peace offerings, meeting in their assemblies, and singing songs to God
- C. Note God's reply: I hate, despise, will not smell, will not accept offerings, take away noise of songs etc.
- D. Why did God so react to their worship?
  - 1. This worship had been commanded by God -- all that they were doing was a part of the law
  - 2. However, they were doing it merely out of habit not from a sincere desire to please God - hence formality

### DISCUSSION:

#### I. WHAT IS SO BAD ABOUT FOLLOWING A PRESCRIBED FORM?

- A. Paul taught: "...decently and in order" 1Cor 14:40
  - 1. Not disputing that order or form must be had
  - 2. All worship must take some form
- B. In formalism a form or order is followed out of habit, without the heart really being in what is being done. The form simply becomes ritualistic.
- C. There are several evils involved in Formalism
  - 1. Service is without heart Pro 4:23; 23:7; Jhn 4:23,24
  - 2. Formalism is without any real sacrifice - yet Jesus demands sacrifice Rom 12:1,2; Matt 16:24-26
  - 3. Formalism does not have the proper respect for the authority of God Mk 7:9; Matt 23:3,4
    - a. Formalism pleases self first
    - b. Example: instrumental music - because they like it
  - 4. No real lasting value with heart in it Matt 22:34-40
  - 5. Cause of formalism is sin Isa 1:10-15; Mal 1 & text

#### II. FORMALISM IN OUR WORSHIP

- A. All of our worship to God follows some form
  - 1. Sing - need someone to lead; Pray - need someone to lead Eph 5:19; 1Cor 14:15,16
  - 2. Lord's Supper & Giving: must be a time and orderly manner of doing Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1Cor 16:1,2
  - 3. Observing these is not necessarily formalism
- B. As we follow this form we must have our heart in each act we perform. Singing Eph 5:18,19 - Praying 1Cor 14:15,16; Phil 4:6; 1Thess 5:17 - Giving 2Cor 9:6-8 - Lord's Supper 1Cor 11:23-26

### III. FORMALISM IN DOCTRINE

- A. Why are you a member of the Lord's church?
- B. Why do you say there is but ONE church? or do you?
- C. Why don't you use instrumental music in worship?
- D. Why do you observe the Lord's supper each Lord's day?
- E. Why do you even worship God?
- F. Is it because of deep convictions based on what the Scriptures teach or because your parents or family always did such things or simply to please someone else
- G. Your answer to these and other questions can help us to determine if formalism is a problem in doctrine

### IV. SOME SIGNS OF FORMALISM

- A. In worship
  - 1. Dwindling of interest in the things of God
  - 2. God seems like some far removed being to us
  - 3. Not really concerned about worship
  - 4. An increase of interest in sin and worldly things
- B. In doctrine
  - 1. One church idea is sort of outdated
  - 2. What does it hurt if we do a little substituting
  - 3. Maybe God really will save those who do not obey all of His commands
  - 4. Soften up the preaching - don't offend by calling sin by name and calling names of those teaching error

### V. THE COST OF FORMALISM

- A. It cost us our time - we may as well be somewhere else
- B. It cost us the favor of God - God is displeased
- C. It will cost us our soul in eternity

### CONCLUSION:

- A. When our heart leaves our worship and our search for Truth; our real love for God and convictions for his way leaves us and is replaced by sin -- either formalism or a complete rejection of God (Atheism) is the result
- B. Formalism is dangerous because it is an outgrowth of a love affair with sin and it comes about so gradually that it is almost imperceptible
- C. It brings the curse of God upon us Gal 1:6-9 and will cost us our soul in eternity.
- D. We must examine ourselves on a regular basis, both individually and as a congregation 2Cor 13:5