

# “Going Through the Motions”

(Phil. 3:4-8)

Dr. Richard S. Koole  
Chapel Pointe  
October 5, 2008

---

## I. Introduction

### A. Today...Philippians 3:4-8

#### 1. Little Mary Jones

In an English village a special film was being shown one evening at a small church. The place was packed with people in the darkness. A knock at the door summoned an usher, who made his way to the front and announced, “Little Mary Jones is lost. Her family and the town officers have been searching everywhere for her. If anyone has seen her or knows of her whereabouts, will he please go to the door and communicate with the friend who is inquiring.” No one moved and the lecturer went on with his address and pictures.

At the close, when the lights were turned on, a lady noticed Mary sitting on a front seat. Going over to her, she said, “Why Mary, didn’t you hear them inquiring for you? Why did you not let them know you were here?”

Surprised, the child asked, “Did they mean me? They said Mary Jones was lost. I am not lost. I knew where I was all the time; I thought it was some other Mary Jones.”

She was lost in the church and did not know it. How many others are like her? Though members of some local church, they have never seen their need of Christ, nor have they believed the message of the gospel.

#### 2. My fear as your pastor

- a. That you’ll get religion....but not a relationship with Christ
- b. Merely going through the motions each Sunday

## II. Text

### A. Religion has driven many away from the church

#### 1. Kids who see frauds

- a. Parents going through the routines of religion
    - 1. Just going through the motions
    - 2. Liking driving to work half asleep
  - b. Talk about a God who lived “once upon a time in a far away land”
  - c. Missing
    - 1. authenticity
    - 2. power
    - 3. relevancy
    - 4. His presence
  - d. Kids often throw out the baby with the bath water
2. The importance of reaching our own children
- a. Bob T’s passion
  - b. 95% of our kids are in public schools
    - 1. And we have good ones
    - 2. But we need to “fill in the gaps and answer the questions they are faced with”
  - c. Our commitment
3. “Religion” will not be the answer

## **B. If simply being “religious” could save you....**

- 1. ...then Paul qualified

*(3) For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—(4) though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:*

- a. He was the consummate “religious” Jew

- b. Impeccable pedigree
  - c. If anybody deserved to be saved...it was Paul
2. Paul presents his credentials to prove his point
- a. Then slams the hammer down
  - b. States that religion alone couldn't save him....or you

## C. Paul Had It All

### 1. Ritual

*(5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews;*

- a. Circumcised the 8<sup>th</sup> day
  - 1. (Gen. 17:12)—“*He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations,*
  - 2. Part of the Abrahamic Covenant
- b. But God never said circumcision would save anybody
- c. Today....not saved because of rituals or routines:
  - 1. Sacraments
  - 2. Baptism (infant and adult)
  - 3. Counting beads
  - 4. Lighting candles
  - 5. Formula prayers
- d. The challenge of keeping worship from becoming routine
  - 1. Fresh and alive
- e. When “Communion” becomes a routine
  - 1. Going through the motions of Communion

## 2. Race

*(5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law,*

### a. *“of the people of Israel”*

1. The chosen people
  - a. Abraham → Isaac → Jacob (Israel)
2. The people of—
  - a. The Holy Land
  - b. The Abrahamic Covenant
  - c. The Ten Commandments
  - d. The Messiah
3. Considered themselves superior to all other groups

### b. Today...saved by race?

1. Finding photo directory of Newhall
  - a. The kids have become the leaders
2. But there are dangers
  - a. Third generation Christians
3. Live in a “Christian Nation”

## 3. Rank

*(5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law,*

### a. Not just an ordinary Jew....*“of the tribe of Benjamin”*

1. The Ten Northern Tribes—Israel
  - a. Fell in 722 BC to Assyria (Iraq)

- b. Much intermarriage
  - 1. Called “Samaritans”
  - 2. The Two Southern Tribes were Judah & Benjamin
    - a. Commonly referred to as “Judah”
    - b. Where we get the name “Jews”
- b. Judah and Benjamin were considered the elite tribes
  - 1. Remained true to Solomon’s true heir—Rehoboam
  - 2. Judah...the firstborn and most powerful son
  - 3. Benjamin...the youngest son of Rachel
    - a. Jacob’s favorite wife
    - b. Only son born in the Promised Land
  - 4. Benjamin went into battle first
  - 5. Produced the first king...Saul (I Sam. 9)
  - 6. Was given Jerusalem when the land was divided

#### **4. Rigid adherence to tradition**

*(5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee,*

- a. “a Hebrew of Hebrews”
- b. The Dutch of Grand Rapids
  - 1. Talking with my dad
  - 2. “Do you know any Dutch?”
  - 3. How quickly we assimilate
- c. Most Jewish kids lost their language and tradition
  - 1. Raised in a “Roman culture”

2. Spoke a different language

d. Not Paul!

1. Tradition!

2. Acts 22:3

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem. Under Gamaliel (the greatest Rabbi) I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.”

3. A Hebrew’s Hebrew!

e. Traditions are fun and okay

1. The Tulip Festival

a. You can wear wooden shoes and sweep the streets

b. But, going to the Tulip Festival won’t make you Dutch

2. Going to church in special clothes won’t make you a Christian

## 5. Religion

*(5) circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee,*

a. *“in regard to the Law, a Pharisee”*

1. Nobody was more religious than the Pharisees

a. Consumed their lives

2. None more than Paul

3. Acts 26:4-5

“My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. <sup>5</sup> They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”

b. Today—Hasidic Jews (describe)

1. All kinds of peculiarities
  - a. Clothes
  - b. Hair
  - c. Prayers
  - d. Diet
2. Man do they have religion!
3. Modern day Pharisees
- c. Religion won't save you today either
  1. Religion isn't necessarily bad
  2. Unless you think it's the ticket to Heaven
  3. ...or you think all religions lead to Heaven
- d. "But they seem so zealous"
- e. The zeal of radical Muslims

## 6. Radical zeal

(6) *as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

- a. Paul was a poster boy for misguided passion
  1. Prior to his conversion
    - a. "*as for zeal, persecuting the Church*"
    - b. He's being modest!
  2. Acts 8:1-3

*"And Saul was there, giving approval to Stephen's death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. (2) Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. (3) But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison."*

## 3. Acts 9:1-2

*“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem*

## 4. Zeal was considered the highest virtue by the Jews

a. None had more zeal than Paul

b. Yet it was misguided

b. I’ve seen a lot of passion in religion

1. But tears and sacrifice won’t save you

2. If God saved the group that was most passionate, He likely would not choose us

**7. Righteousness**

*(6) as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

a. *“as for legalistic righteousness, faultless”*

1. If the Law is the standard for righteousness—then Paul declares himself “faultless”

2. If you did a balance sheet on Paul

a. Assets and liabilities

b. Huge profit column (assets)

b. But this is not true righteousness

1. Note the word *“legalistic”*

2. Considered righteous by other people...not by God

**D. Paul’s response**

1. Paul had it all...but none of that stuff mattered

*(7) But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. (8) What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

2. Paul didn't care about his achievements in the eyes of people
  - a. *"I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ"*
3. The only credential that mattered to him was his relationship with Christ
4. *"The surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"*
  - a. Salvation
  - b. A relationship rather than a religion

#### **E. "Going through the motions each Sunday"**

1. How do you engage on Sunday mornings
  - a. Do you intentionally prepare for this special time
  - b. Only so much we can do....the rest is up to you
2. If I ever start preaching that way, I need to stop preaching
  - a. I'm scared each time I preach
  - b. God will hold me accountable
  - c. The most important hour of your week
3. Communion
  - a. Has it become routine for you?
    1. Are you merely going through the motions?
  - b. Or are you fully engaged with Christ