

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, April 7, 2018

Let me take on the task of discussing an uncommon term - *uncovering the unreligious*. Look it up in any dictionary and you'll be informed that the proper English words are *irreligious*, *nonreligious* and *secular*. Well, I want to discuss that rare breed of human being who just happens to be *unreligious* whether it's considered proper English or not!

Personally, I've never cared much for the term religious. Oh yes, I do follow the God of the Old and New Testament/Covenant, yet I refuse to be caught in what I would call this world's religious conundrum. When you consider someone to be religious, what does the term really mean to you?

I suppose many are fine with the term and don't even mind being categorized as one who is considered religious. They may regularly attend religious services of their choice. They may even be involved in ministering to those in need through one or more social ministries. They might even perform rituals to justify their faith journey.

There's a certain outward pride that can often be seen in those who are outwardly religious in their actions. I suspect the love of the Lord may not even be in their hearts. And just like the Pharisees during the times of Jesus, they may well go around doing their best to "win friends and influence people" they meet in the marketplace.

They might impress many through their pious behavior, but I doubt God is impressed with their antics at all. Perhaps their pride has even become their god. They may say they worship their God, but deep down inside they may well be quite distant from their Father in Heaven. Are you easily deceived by false gods that take you away from our True God?

Frankly, I'd much rather be known as a "man of faith" rather than be classified as religious. So let's see if we can *uncover the unreligious* - those that I believe are truly in touch with their Heavenly Father and His desires for His followers. After all, it's not about 'what we want to do for Him.' It's about 'what He wants us to do for Him!' Are your words and actions designed to bring pleasure to others or to simply please God?

In Hebrews 11, the writer describes men and women of faith of whom "*the world was not worthy*". We find throughout the chapter phrases commencing "*By faith, Abel By faith, Enoch By faith, Noah By faith, Abraham By faith, Isaac By faith, Jacob By faith, Moses*" And so the author goes on describing men and women of faith who looked forward to the promised Messiah.

Hebrews 12:1-2 then instructs us "*Therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

In Galatians 5, Paul addresses the acts of sinful nature in verses 19 and 20 that are found in all mankind. He continues in verses 22 and 23 to present the fruit of the Spirit that should be evident in all believers. Then, in Galatians 5:24-26 he proposes "*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.*" I imagine many who appear religious fit the mold of Paul's warning.

What this world really needs and what God truly desires is more men and women of faith to help turn this present world upside down. He needs the *unreligious* to seek Him and share His love with those who God puts in their paths. They must love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength and genuinely love others as they love themselves.

Join me in becoming *unreligious* for God's glory!

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 23:27; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 6:12-17; 1 Timothy 5:3-4; Hebrews 11:37-40; James 1:26-27

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Matthew 23:27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.

Galatians 5:22-23 New International Version (NIV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Ephesians 6:12-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 Timothy 5:3-4 New International Version (NIV)

³ Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

Hebrews 11:37-40 New International Version (NIV)

³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

James 1:26-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.