



## *Wells of Salvation Ministries*

Sermon Outline 14     Author: Edmund E. Wells

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### **“Ribbons, Wrappings, and Reality”**

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1-23     Text: 2 Corinthians 10:7 and 1 Samuel 16:7

**Introduction:** Aren't decorated and wrapped Christmas presents pretty? Every year we see them scattered and heaped under our Christmas trees. We like to look at them and speculate on the contents of each one. If they are so nice, if the ribbons and wrappings we purchase, if the packages are such a source of pleasure – why don't we just leave them there all year? The answer to this is easy – we enjoy the bright, beautiful appearance of the packages, but we long for the reality they contain. Religion is much like our Christmas gifts. We enjoy appearance, but we must discover reality!

#### I. Ribbons (External Beauty of Religion)

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|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Stained glass        | 10. Oratory added to oratorios  |
| 2. Cushioned pews       | A. God speaks of the foolishness of preaching<br>(1 Corinthians 1:21) |
| 3. Pleasant furnishings |   |
| 4. Candles              | 11. Prayers   |
| 5. Crosses              | 12. Baptism   |
| 6. Choirs               | 13. Holy Communion  |
| 7. Beautiful music      | 14. Confirmation  |
| 8. Hymns                | 15. Membership  |
| 9. Anthems              | 16. Socials   |

#### II. Wrappings (External Appearance Of Religion)

- Social action
  - Aid to underprivileged nations
    - Equipment
    - Missionaries
  - Hospitals for ill
    - Examples of hospitals sponsored by Christian denominations or groups
  - Homes for orphans
  - Complexes for senior citizens
  - Food, clothing for needy
  - Help where help is required and longed for
    - e.g., Katrina aftermath, earthquakes, tsunamis
- Education
  - Church-sponsored colleges and universities
- Morality
  - Public positions against, e.g., gambling, violence, immorality on TV
- James said this is pure religion (James 1:27)
  - He naturally expected actions to surface from the heart
    - He associated faith with works (James 2:18)

### III. Reality (Internal Spring Of Religion)

1. Jesus said our actions stem from our hearts (Matthew 12:34, 35)
2. Paul said all the ribbons and wrappings of religion can be the pretty coverings for emptiness (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
  - A. Who would want a beautiful Christmas package filled with the disappointment of nothing?
  - B. God is displeased, He is grieved with...
    - a. Our ceremony added to good works
    - b. Our pomp and circumstance when it lacks heart
    - c. (Isaiah 1:11-20)
    - d. (Psalm 51:16-19)
    - e. "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22)

**Conclusion:** How would you feel with empty gift boxes? Where would we be with an empty manger? With swaddling clothes that promise much, but hold nothing? How does God feel about our empty lives? Let's give God what He wants – our hearts. With our ribbons, with our wrappings, let us include reality! And when we tire of our ribbons and wrappings and discard them, let us not carelessly throw Reality out with the trash and trivia. In this world of pretense and sham, God is real! Let us cling to this Reality!