



DANGER

DANGERS



DANGER

Facing The

LORD'S CHURCH

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

**THE
WORLD**

**PRIDE /
SELFISHNESS**

**ERROR /
DIVISION**

**STUFF /
MATERIALISM**

**APATHY /
COMPROMISE**



DANGERS *facing The* **LORD'S CHURCH**



THE
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■ **The church (people of God) has always faced DANGER!**

- ◆ Persecution / temptation – Mark 13:9 / 1 Cor. 10:1-13; 1 John 2:15-17; Mt 6:24
- ◆ Carnality – 1 Cor. 3:1ff; Jam 3:14ff
- ◆ Drifting away from the truth – Heb. 2:1; Gal. 1:6-9
- ◆ Lukewarmness – Rev 3:14 ff
- ◆ Deception – Mat. 24:4; 2 Pet 2:1-22

Dangers Facing The **LORD'S CHURCH**

**STORMY
WEATHER
AHEAD**

The **DANGER** *of*
FORMALISM

Revelation 2:1–7 (NKJV)

REVELATION 2:1-7 (NKJV)

¹ “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,
‘These things says He who holds the seven stars
in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the
seven golden lampstands: ² “I know your works,
your labor, your patience, and that you cannot
bear those who are evil. And you have tested
those who say they are apostles and are not, and
have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered
and have patience, and have labored for My
name’s sake and have not become weary.

REVELATION 2:1-7 (NKJV)

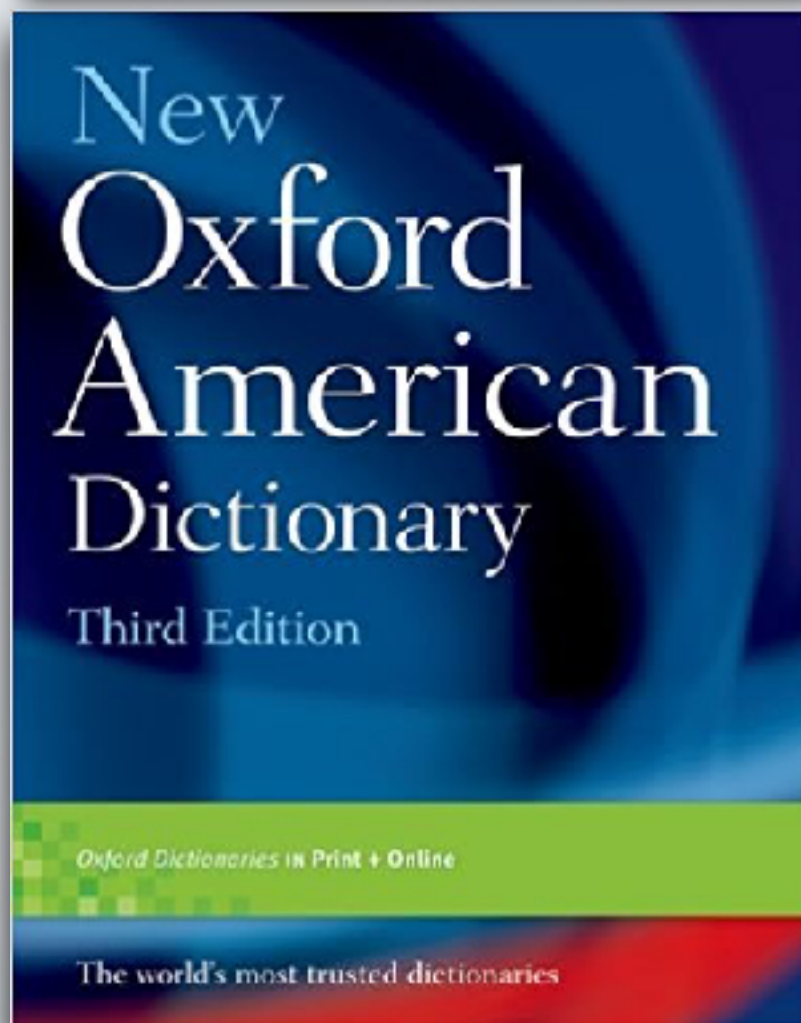
⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

To Define “FORMALISM”

formalism 

noun | for-mal-ism | \ˈfɒr-mə-ˈli-zəm\



- **1** *mass noun* Excessive adherence to prescribed forms.
 - **1.1** The use of forms of worship without regard to inner significance.
 - **1.2** The basing of ethics on the form of the moral law without regard to intention or consequences.
 - **1.3** Concern or excessive concern with form and technique rather than content in artistic creation.
 - **1.4** (in the theatre) a symbolic and stylized manner of production.
 - **1.5** The treatment of mathematics as a manipulation of meaningless symbols.

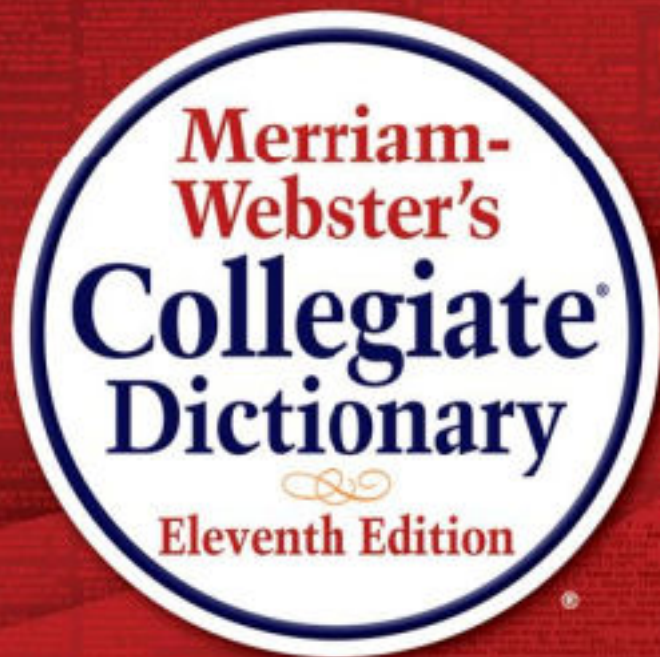
THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

To Define “FORMALISM”

formalism 

noun | for-mal-izm | \ˈfɒr-mə-ˈli-zəm\


America's Best-Selling Dictionary



1 : the practice or the doctrine of strict adherence to prescribed or external forms (as in religion or art); *also* : an instance of this
2 : marked attention to arrangement, style, or artistic means (as in art or literature) usually with corresponding de-emphasis of content

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

To Define “FORMALISM”

A photograph of a baby sitting in a bathtub filled with soapy water. The baby has a surprised or pleading expression. A speech bubble originates from the baby's mouth, containing the text 'Please do not throw me out with the bathwater ...'.

Please do not
throw me out with
the bathwater ...


**PLEASE DO NOT
MISUNDERSTAND!**

NOT even remotely
suggesting the
abandonment of implied,
exemplified and
commanded “FORMS” —

Beware of extremes. The
misuse of a thing is no
argument against the
right use of it.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM

A photograph of a baby sitting in a bathtub filled with soapy water. The baby has a surprised or pleading expression. A speech bubble originates from the baby's mouth.


Please do not
throw me out with
the bathwater ...

**2 Timothy 1:13
(NKJV)**

¹³ Hold fast the
pattern of sound
words which you have
heard from me, in
faith and love which
are in Christ Jesus.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM

A photograph of a baby sitting in a bathtub filled with soapy water. The baby has a surprised or pleading expression. A speech bubble originates from the baby's mouth.


Please do not
throw me out with
the bathwater ...

**1 Corinthians 11:2
(NKJV)**

² Now I praise you,
brethren, that you
remember me in all things
and keep the traditions just
as I delivered *them* to you.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM

A photograph of a baby sitting in a bathtub filled with soapy water. The baby has a surprised or pleading expression. A speech bubble originates from the baby's mouth.


Please do not
throw me out with
the bathwater ...

**2 Thessalonians 2:15
(NKJV)**

¹⁵ Therefore, brethren,
stand fast and hold the
traditions which you were
taught, whether by word or
our epistle.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM

A photograph of a baby sitting in a bathtub filled with soapy water. The baby has a surprised or pleading expression. A speech bubble originates from the baby's mouth.

Please do not
throw me out with
the bathwater ...

**2 Thessalonians 3:6
(NKJV)**

⁶ But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM

On One Hand

There is danger in allowing our scriptural practices to become our primary focus, negating their true meaning & purpose!

On other Hand

We MUST guard against viewing the LORD's instructions negatively and unimportant – rejecting both form & substance



THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

We MUST Follow NT PATTERN / FORM



“Once you have the correct actions in place for worship, where the real effort comes in is keeping your heart and mind focused on what you are doing! Worship in spirit takes REAL WORK- REAL EFFORT! It takes mental and physical preparation. Unfortunately, the current climate in the church tends to treat worship as a time for entertaining the worshipper and catering to the worshippers wants. Consequently, worshippers have lost that deep, reverent, mindset that approaches the worship assembly with a sense of respect and cautious intention to please God.

(Dave Miller, Piloting the Straight, pg. 182)

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Israelites Were Rebuked ...



Isaiah 1:11–17 (NKJV)

¹¹ “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. ¹² “When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts?

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Israelites Were Rebuked ...



Isaiah 1:11–17 (NKJV)

¹³ Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. ¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Israelites Were Rebuked ...



Isaiah 1:11–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷ Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7

Praise

Labor –

Patience –

Intolerance –

Unveiling false teachers –

Endurance –

Toil –

Relentless –

Complaint

Left their first love

The Lord demands service & obedience from a pure and wholly devoted heart. - Mark 12:29-31; Rom 6:17,18; 1 John 5:3

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed

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Left their first love

Mechanical routine, even if proper in its outward form, will not please God! - Mat 23:23; 1 Cor 13:13



THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23

Matthew 23:23–33 (NKJV)

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23

Matthew 23:23-33 (NKJV)

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23

Matthew 23:23–33 (NKJV)

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23

Matthew 23:23-33 (NKJV)

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23

Matthew 23:23-33 (NKJV)

³¹ “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.
³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ *guilt*. ³³ Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

The Early Church Was Warned & Instructed



- The church in Ephesus had left its “first love.” — Rev. 2:1-7
- The Pharisees were guilty— Mat 23:23
- Any act, regardless of how “good” or “needed,” if done without love, profits one nothing — 1 Cor. 13:1-3
- In the latter days men would have “a form of godliness but deny its power ... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” — 2 Tim 3:5,7
- Worship & service **MUST** be in **BOTH** Spirit & Truth — John 4:24; Rom 12:1-2

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

Why IS FORMALISM Such A Threat?



- It appeals to the carnal mind (self centered, arrogant, materialistic, unregenerate) — 1 Cor. 3:1-3; James 3:14-4:6
- It appeals to the self-righteous (religious but proud, self-sufficient) — Luke 18:9-14, 18-23
- It appeals to the hypocrite — (they love the praises of men) — Mt. 6:1-18; 23

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

HEED The Warning / Take Necessary ACTION

Revelation 2:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

- **Remember** - Virtue of Recall – Luke 15:17-21; Eph 1:3-14
- **Honesty** - self investigation – 2 Cor. 13:5; Heb 12:15
- **Repent & Return** Change of mind, heart / put the Lord first / His will / His work / His purposes – FOR HIM!
- Only ONE thing put them in danger / only one thing could restore them — Mat 6:19-33

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

Let us be TRUE Christians In BOTH FORM & SUBSTANCE



- Worshipping in Spirit & Truth!
- Seeking to obey the Lord in ALL things & for the right reasons!
- Being faithful and dependable in the Lord's service while always keeping our motives genuine, heartfelt & humble.

THE DANGER OF FORMALISM

Let us be TRUE Christians In BOTH FORM & SUBSTANCE



Romans 6:16–18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷

But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Dangers Facing The **LORD'S CHURCH**

**STORMY
WEATHER
AHEAD**

**THE DANGER OF
FORMALISM**

REVELATION 2:1-7 (NKJV)

Charts by Don McClain

Preached June 10, 2018

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<http://w65stchurchofchrist.org/coc/sermons/>

Matthew 13:43–46 (NKJV)

⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! ⁴⁴ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.