

Pure Religion

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James 1:26-27 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

I. The primary definition of the word “religion” concerns the true worship of God.

RELIGION, n. relij'on. *L. religio, from religo, to bind anew; re and ligo, to bind. This word seems originally to have signified an oath or vow to the gods, or the obligation of such an oath or vow, which was held very sacred by the Romans.*

1. Religion, in its most comprehensive sense, includes a belief in the being and perfections of God, in the revelation of his will to man, in man's obligation to obey his commands, in a state of reward and punishment, and in man's accountableness to God; and also true godliness or piety of life, with the practice of all moral duties.

2. Religion, as distinct from theology, is godliness or real piety in practice, consisting in the performance of all known duties to God and our fellow men

3. The word is used to describe any system of faith and worship, but the primary meaning is the true worship and service of God.

A. So, in addressing the subject in the text religion means true faith, true godliness, true holiness.

1. As we talk about what pure religion is, we are talking about what pure faith, pure godliness, pure holiness is.

B. The text tells us here that there is only “vain religion” and “pure religion.”

1. “Vain religion” is worthless and will do no one any good, will never reconcile a sinner to God, will never rescue the perishing.

2. “Vain religion” is professing but not possessing.

3. It is taking God’s name in vain; claiming his name, identifying as a child of God, but not living like one.

4. “Vain religion” operates from a self-deceived heart.

5. It is recognized by an unbridled tongue; no restraint, no check, no curb, ungoverned, and ungovernable.

II. Pure religion is described by two things.

A. To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

B. Pure religion is identified first by an unselfish life and attitude.

1. More concern for others than for oneself.

2. More feeling for others than for oneself.

3. A life lived for others; a life of service to others.

4. A life patterned after the life of Christ who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others. (Matthew 20:28)

C. Pure religion is next identified by the fact that it is unspotted from the world.

1. This is clearly speaking of moral issues; not stained with the worldly ideas and philosophies concerning moral issues.
 2. To be unspotted from the world is to be completely in agreement with, and not compromising or contradicting the moral law of God.
 3. Not ashamed to identify with, proclaim, stand up for right and against what is wrong, according to what God has said in his Word about it.
- D. There are these two aspects of pure religion that must go together; we cannot have one without the other, or we have vain religion and not pure religion.
1. There are people who have a heart for others and do a lot to help people, but this alone does not constitute pure religion.
 2. There are people who are very attentive to being separated from the world and try to live holy lives, but neither does this alone constitute pure religion.
 3. Those who do a lot to help other people, but compromise on what is right and wrong, or handle loosely the moral law of God, simply have “vain religion.”
 - a) Which is of no profit in terms of eternity, because it is ultimately a selfish thing they are doing for their own honor, and not for the honor of God.
 4. Those who separate themselves from the world and try to be holy by isolating themselves from everyone else are guilty of the same thing.
- E. Pure religion is about service to others and true holiness before God.
1. There must be both together at the same time for there to be pure religion, and undefiled before God and the father.
 2. It is about honoring God with our life and not seeking our own honor.
 3. It is about a heart that is restrained and governed by the Spirit of God, so that the tongue that is attached to it is under control and not unruly and contradicting what pure religion is know to be
 4. It is about a heart that is not operating in deceit, half-truths, and lies, but only that which is true, honest, just, and pure.
 5. Given time, the tongue of such a person will reveal what kind of heart is inside.
 6. Pure religion is about a life lived to serve others; to make their way easier; to point them to the Savior; to rescue them from sin and destruction.
 7. Pure religion is about keeping our faith in God and our service to Him unspotted from the world;
 - a) Living and doing according to the Word of God and not mixing our faith, our service, or our love for God with anything from this wicked world.
 - b) Listening to, or watching, people who appear to be religious, but not pure, will leave spots on you from the world.
 8. If we keep our heart pure and unspotted by the world, then our words will have the purity and power to make a difference in the lives of others.