

JUNE 12, 2022

Your Religion, Worthless or Pure?

How is your witness, does it testify to the Truth of Christ?
How's your walk with God? Is it on the straight and narrow?
Is your walk worthy of your calling?

Does your walk match your talk?
Does your talk match your walk?
Or does your talk disqualifies your walk?

Totally different question: Can you give a description of your religion in one or two sentences? We will see how this comes together at the end

This morning look at passage in James
Shows us two religions under same banner of Christianity
Worthless and the Pure and undefiled

Listen for the contrast James 1:26-27

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James is contrasting false faith to genuine faith

Does this twice more in his letter

1. Faith with no works vs. Faith with works 2. Hearers only of the Word vs. Doers.

JAMES IS GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER
GOD'S GLORY and ONE'S ETERNITY IS at ISSUE

THIS PASSAGE IS HERE TO INFORM US, INSPECT US, and INSPIRE US.
PRAY THAT GOD WOULD HIT A BULLSEYE at YOUR HEART
To bring repentance and refinement

Big Idea: Be not afraid to examine yourself and see what religion you truly are. Your eternity is at stake.

SERMON TITLE - YOUR RELIGION: WORTHLESS OR PURE LET'S PRAY!

Before we unpack, LET'S GET TO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT JAMES

1. He describes himself as a Bond servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. He is the half-brother of Jesus and brother of Jude.
3. 1st Leader of the church in Jerusalem for over 30 years. (Jewish converts)
4. Mentioned twice in the Gospels.
5. Presided over the 1st Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) to settle dispute over the
6. Galatians 2, Paul calls him a pillar of the church.
7. Martyred around 61 AD, thrown off the temple, stoned and beaten.(Forgive them)

HE REFERRED TO HIS AUDIENCE AS BELOVED BRETHERN

>Themes from the Sermon on the Mount

>40 times references from the Old Testament (Psalm and Proverbs) /20 in the NEW

>His letter can be regarded as a handbook in practical Christianity.

JAMES DOES NOT MINCE WORDS

PASSIONATE ABOUT UNCOMPROMISING OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD

HE SEES THE CARNAGE OF HYPOCRISY

**PEOPLE OF GENUINE FAITH, THEIR FAITH WILL ALWAYS BE ACTIVE /
COUNTERFEIT FAITH WILL LACK ACTION, OR WE WILL SEE TODAY, HAVE
ACTIONS THAT ARE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THEY SAY THEY BELIEVE**

**TODAY WILL SEE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEART/HANDS.
STICKMAN GOSPEL**

T/S SO LET US NOW UNPACK VERSE 26

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this person's religion is worthless.

**WHAT A BOLD STATEMENT.....TRUTH IN LOVE
SPEAKING TO ALL PROFESSING CHRITIANS / THE GENUINE AND THE LOST**

T/S Let's break down this verse by phrases

IF ANYONE THINKS HE IS RELIGIOUS:

In this context, it is one who thinks he is in good standing with God. He is one whose external religious activities seem to match up with being a good Christian.

Yet does not bridle his tongue, does not control his language, who speaks unhindered without regard to the situation, unrestrained tongue, Sloppy/loose talk

But deceives his own heart: This person is self-deceived. He believes a falsehood. He has wrongly placed his confidence in his religious works as merit for God's favor.

This person's religion is worthless: In this context, James refers to the word religion as external religious acts (fasting, singing praises, reading the Bible, leading worship,

going to church) that are derived from one's internal convictions. Thus, all of one's acts of external worship are suddenly worthless, of no value, dead, vain, powerless.

CAN HAVE ALL THE RIGHT STUFF AND BE LOST OR IN A STUMBLE

T/S LOOK AT SOME KEY WORDS

I. The tongue

Why does James use the tongue to stress this point?

Because the tongue reveals the heart. There is a direct connection of the heart to the ONE mouth. . Matthew 12:34...

34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

Matthew 15:17-20 ... the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and those things defile the person. For out of the heart come ..., false testimonies, and slanderous statements. These are the things that defile the person.

An unbridled tongue speaks slander, lies, gossip, foul language, stirs dissension, is crude, rude, blasphemous, invents stories, is critical, full of grumbling, quick to speak. Proverbs 6 says GOD HATES A LYING TONGUE and a FALSE WITNESS

James had a lot to say about the tongue. It is a small part of the body yet can be the most powerful and destructive. (James 3)

1. The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity
2. It is a member that defiles the entire body.
3. It sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (entire forest)
4. No one can tame the tongue, it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.
5. With it we bless God and curse men who have been made in God's image.

Matthew 12:36-37, Jesus said that every careless word spoken will be accounted for. "For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned."

II. Self-deceived heart. They do not live in reality. Convinced they are in good standing but are eternally lost, or they are a Christian who is stumbling.

Despite their sin being obvious to others, they seem secure in their religion. They have a sense of piety based on works.

Since the Word says that the tongue reveals the condition of the heart, then one who continues to show a practice of slanderous, defiled speech without true repentance demonstrates that their heart has not been changed.

They are dead in their sin; they are not born again. According to the Word of God, they are actually children of the devil.

1 John 3:7-8 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. ... (give example, if Spirit leads)

Sadly, these people are greatly deceived. They delude themselves. They are like the five virgins who have the lamp but no oil on the inside.

Matthew 7:21, they have all the external religious activities but are lost. They will hear on Judgement Day, depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness, I never knew you.

Matthew Henry "The man who has a slandering tongue cannot have a truly humble gracious heart."

C.F. Deems "If any member of our body is an instrument of sin, it shows that our hearts are still unchanged by the grace of God." No member shows this more quickly than the tongue.

Pastor Jeff "When Jesus changes us, He changes all of us"

What are some causes of self-deception: (James MacArthur)

1. The heart is deceptive above all things and desperately sick. Jeremiah 17:9

2. Superficial understanding of the Gospel:

No understanding of the Gospel. Wrong definitions (justification, grace, love, repentance, repentance, faith, sin, wrath). **Not aware of one's own depravity. Most couldn't give an explanation of the Gospel**

3. False sense of assurance:

Say a prayer, feel good about God, God loves me so much, God loves us all, **it's all about the emotions**, had a dream, vision, saw the light when God saved me in the accident, affirmation you're saved from others. All about grace, just believe and you are in, easy believe-ism.

4. Failure at self-examination; No recognition of a time of change, no funeral, no examination of fruit, no true repentance, no mourning over sin.

5. Into church activities, very active in groups and books, busy with church activities.

Failure of the church to speak truth in love: Ezekiel 33, no watchman on the wall. Acts 20:26. I am innocent of the blood of all men for I did not shrink back from telling you the whole counsel of God. WE NEED TO BE LIKE THIS

WHAT IS THE HOPE FOR THE SELF- DECEIVED? TO BECOME A FOOL

1 Corinthians 3:18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool so that he may become wise.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Jesus Christ is the HOPE ... Cry Out to God. (See the Stickman)

**CHRISTIAN WHO STUMBLES, there is forgiveness but there are consequences.
PAIN, BROKEN TRUST, DAMAGED RELATIONSHIPS, CONFUSION**

Though eternally secure in Christ and not worthless souls, our religion however becomes worthless, at least for that moment. All the external displays of religion are suddenly negated, wiped out, by the unrestrained tongue.

LIKE HITTING THE DELETE BUTTON

As Christ's ambassadors, we can lose credibility suddenly and the sweet aroma of Christ can now become putrid

'When we are ugly with our tongue it shows that we have ugly deep in us and this must be dealt with' Doug Mclean.

Our worship is warfare and at times we will falter; As Paul wrote in Romans 7:19, For the good that I want, I don't do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want....

verse 21, But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, which is in my members

But by the grace of God, we have the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sin, that leads to repentance.

As Christians we are to;

1. Mourn our sin and acknowledge that we first sinned against God
2. Repent and ask God for forgiveness
3. Go to those we have hurt and ask for forgiveness and make amends.
4. Submit your heart and tongue to the controlling power of the Holy Spirit
5. Pray for God to help you with this aspect of your life like King David.

Psalm 141:3 Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil deed

Psalm 139:24 Examine me Lord to see if there is any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way

6. Embrace Romans 8:1, (See the Stickman.1 John 2:6, Romans 8:1)

How should our speech be?

Ephesians 4:29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. (kind, loving)

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to respond to each person.

III. Worthless. SO WHY DOES JAMES CALL THIS RELIGION WORTHLESS?

>NO VALUE, IN FACT IT DAMAGES, STAINS THE WITNESS OF CHRIST

>It hurts others and brings confusion to the young in faith

>It can be a stumbling block, turning people away from seeking Christ.

> For that moment, there is no Christ, no love, no Glory to God. Worthless!

>1 Corinthians 13:2 ...and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing....

T/S Now let's look at verse 27 and see James description of what is a pure and undefiled religion. See how James will, by means of contrast, bring light to the authentic.

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

JAMES IS SAYING HERE...That this is true Christianity. It is pure, clean, and holy. It is always active, responding to the heart of God, which is in every believer.

My paraphrase:

It is a religion that reaches out to the most needy, by miraculously changed sinners, who have been transformed by the grace of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to live always with their eyes fixed on Christ, loving God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength and their neighbor, while remaining untainted and uncompromised by the evils of the world. **We, who have been born again, are chosen witnesses and servants of God that will witness to the world, the holiness and love of God.**

Looking at the phrase, ***"In the sight of God and Father"***....James is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and thus it is our God who is supplying to us His description of pure and undefiled religion.

Let's now look at two defining actions that a Christian undertakes. 1. To visit orphans and widows in distress, and 2. Remain unstained by the world. (See the Stickman Gospel...now on mission carrying his cross)

1. Visiting orphans and widows in distress.....

>James uses this example because they were the most needy and underserved people.

>It reveals God's love for the suffering and to those who have no way to repay.

This is God's heart as seen throughout the Old and New Testaments

>**Deuteronomy 10:18** *He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the stranger by giving him food and clothing.*

> **Psalm 68:6** ***He is the father to the fatherless and a judge for the widows***

> **Acts 6,** The early church appointed deacons to feed the widows

> **Luke 7,** We see Jesus raising the only son of a widow from the dead. The text says He felt compassion for her.

All throughout the Gospel accounts we see how Jesus had compassion on the hungry, sick, the demon possessed and the grieving. This is the heart of God.

>We too are called to have compassion, not only to orphans and widows but to whoever God directs us who are in need. We take our religion to the streets, the neighborhoods, prisons, the hungry, tired, the weary, the unsheltered and unclothed, hospitals, rehab centers, orphanages, **wherever God leads, for we have been saved for good works prepared before time in Christ Jesus.(Ephesians 2:10).**

>Definition of compassion: To have pity, to literally suffer together, a feeling that arises when confronted with one's suffering ... feeling motivated to bring relief to the sufferer when able to do so.

In Exodus 33, we read that God's glory is His compassion.

Moses prayed for God to show him His glory and God responds with this answer, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and show compassion on whom I will show compassion"

Great example of compassion is seen in Luke 10, regarding the Good Samaritan.

See the religious ones who are self-deceived who walk around the needy man.

The Samaritan, who was on a journey, gives his all to a stranger. He pitied him and was moved to respond with sacrificial love... **This is Christ likeness serving from a holy heart. This is James 1:26-27 in a nutshell**

To claim Christ and not be compassionate is wrong heartedness... James 2:14-17

What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

1 John 3:17 But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him?

We are blessed as a Bridge family. We see this kind of compassion lived out.

>We witness and are inspired by Deborah's and Pat's care of their mothers

>Our support in Kenya with Pastor Frederick caring for over two hundred orphans and more than seventy widows

> There are many other acts of sacrificial love that go on nameless within our body

>This is such a testimony of God's presence in His people.

T/S Pure and undefiled religion is not only charitable, it is to remain unstained by the world. This occurs as we pursue holiness.

As God's witnesses, we are called to be holy as God is holy.

> This means to be set apart, undefiled, and living according to God's moral standards. >We are no longer of the world but in the world,

>Hating what is evil and loving what God loves.

> Our allegiance is no longer to Satan and his ways.

When we talk about the world, we do not mean Creation, or humanity, but the world system of evil that is in the world that dominates human life. 1 John 5:19
We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

In John 17, Jesus prays for us to be protected from the evil one (will be hated)
John 17:14-17 *I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one*

In 1 John, John shoots us this warning to check our hearts.

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

James 4:4 *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. We are the Bride of Christ, to love anything more than God is adultery.*

Remember Lot's wife.

As Christians, we no longer have anything in common with the evils of this world.

We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our treasure is no longer the things of this world, but are totally found in Christ. He is our one desire, He is our treasure.

Look at Moses. *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.*

Our call to purity is to witness to the world of God's purity. When we compromise or yield to temptation, we dampen our witness and stain the name of Christ to the on-looking world. The world is in desperate need to see Jesus in and through our lives.

>There is no price you can put on the value of our witness.

> As Pastor Jeff has said, it is the single most important thing we have other than the gift of our salvation. **Therefore we must be diligent to guard it with all our heart.**

Paul said we are living epistles...living letters testifying by our lives the glories of God.

You never know how much the purity of your walk, and the charitable deeds you do in love, impacts others. That is to be seen in heaven.

Again, our Bridge family has so many examples of lives sold out to Jesus

Example: Daniel

T/S... As we come toward the end, I want to share some instructions from the Bible on how we actively remain unspotted by the world.

1 .Psalm 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word...* **Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth**

2.1 John 3:2-3 *2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* **Keeping our gaze on Christ is purifying, no longer fixing our eyes on the world.**

3. Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

What are you filling your mind up with? It is going somewhere. Are you being fashioned by the world or by Christ.

3. Matthew 4:8-10 *"All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'*

John Piper defined worship as a term we use to cover all the acts of the heart, mind and body that intentionally express the worth of God.

Worship God, temptation flees. Submit to God and resist the devil, and he will flee.

4. Titus 2: 6 -10, 12-14 *Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.....For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, eager for good deeds.* **Sounds like James 1:27**

5.1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.* **Sovereign grace and man's responsibility**

T/S As we come to the close, we see James, in just two verses, makes clear distinctions between the two religions, Worthless and the pure and undefiled

1. One shows compassion, the other does not
2. One witnesses to the attributes of God, the other to the flaws of man
3. One is pure and undefiled, the other is dirty

4. One draws the lost to the Gospel, the other repels
5. One imitates Christ, the other reveals man's sin nature
6. One brings hope, the other none at all
7. One is empowered by the Holy Spirit, the other has no power at all
8. One is approved by God, the other is condemned by God
9. One glorifies God, the other attempts to glorify man.

Jesus is the example of the pure and undefiled religion. He was the perfect witness and servant. His final hours, before Pilate and on the cross is seen here in James 1:27

27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- > **He was a foreigner.** "My kingdom is not of this world" (**John 18:36**)
- > **He came to testify to the truth.** He was a witness to the Truth (**John 18:37**)
- > **He was pure and undefiled.** *He had done no violence, nor was deceit found in his mouth (Isaiah 53:9)*
- > **He remained unstained by the world.** *He was oppressed and afflicted but He did not open His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)* He did not revile back
- > **He cared for the widow.** "Woman, behold your son." to John "Behold your mother" (**John 19:26-27**)
- > **He cared for the orphans.** "***It is finished***" (John 19:30). *In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (Ephesians 1:5)*

So how is your witness? How is your walk? How is your talk? Can you describe your religion in one or two sentences?

One word will do, if it is the pure and undefiled one; **the precious name of Jesus!**

AMEN.

LET'S PRAY