

WHICH KIND DO YOU HAVE? (James 1:26-27)

I. Fake religion (vs. 26).

- A. James lets us know that he is writing this to people who are Christians by using the phrase “among you.”
 - 1. Several times he has already called them “my brethren” or “my beloved brethren.”
 - 2. This tells us that even as people who’ve been baptized, we can have vain, empty or useless, religion.
- B. Those that seem to be religious refers to those who think they are such.
 - 1. In fact, some translations have “thinketh himself to be religious.”
 - 2. This is a person who believes he is a religious person.
- C. The worst kind of delusion there is, is self-delusion.
 - 1. This type person has convinced himself that he is devoted to God.
 - 2. The word religious carries the idea of external devotion to God.
 - a. This person appears on the outside to be devoted to God.
 - b. He or she does the right things at the right times in the right ways.
 - c. Woods wrote this about the word: “There is in the word some suggestion of scrupulosity, the disposition to be particularly concerned with the most minute details.”
 - 3. He sings the right amount of verses, he makes sure the Lord Supper is taken at the right time and he looks the part, being dressed just right each service.
- D. Despite his appearance of having everything in order, he cannot control his tongue.
 - 1. The word “bridleth” paints the picture of a man putting a bridle in his mouth to lead himself about.
 - 2. James will go into greater detail later about the use of the tongue and how deadly it is.
 - 3. Here, he gives us a brief glimpse of how much of a problem the tongue can be.
 - 4. He has all the outward signs of being a true Christian, but he cannot control his tongue.
 - a. This may refer to gossip, foul language or whatever else speech related it may be.
 - b. Whatever his tongue problem is, it negates whatever else good he may do.
- E. By being unable to control his tongue, he deceives himself into thinking that because the externals are right, he is right with God.
 - 1. This word is in the tense that shows continuous action.
 - 2. He continually deceives himself.
 - 3. He is blind to his faults concerning his tongue and has no clue that he is totally lost because of it.
- F. He is lost because his religion is vain our without benefit.

1. His religious acts are such that they might as well not even be done.
 2. It matters not how perfect our worship acts may be, if our tongue is unbridled then our soul is lost.
- G. It is vain because the life that offers it fails to please God.
1. When one aspect of a life is out of joint, the whole is displeasing to God.
 2. All the good one may do in one area is negated by evil in another.
- H. One paraphrase of this verse is: "If anyone says he is a Christian, but doesn't control his sharp tongue, he is just fooling himself, and his religion isn't worth much."

II. **Pure religion (vs. 27).**

- A. James uses two words to describe the religious life of someone that pleases God:
1. Pure is that which is clean;
 2. undefiled is that which is not contaminated.
- B. In order to be pleasing to God in religious life, one must be clean morally and undefiled in speech or whatever other area of life.
1. Having both of these present shows that one's heart is involved in his religious life.
 2. His life is not a mere show for others to see but is pure from the inside out.
- C. The one who has such a religion is going to show the world by the actions that he performs towards others as well as the actions he performs towards God.
- D. He is going to be involved in actions that are up to the standard of God, which is the idea of the phrase "before God."
1. There are certain things in the eyes of God that are right.
 2. It is His standard by which we are going to be judged, not the world's.
- E. The phrase "to visit" carries the idea of checking on with the idea of assisting.
1. We are to check on and aid those who are less fortunate.
 2. God's people have always been commanded to fight for the underdog, the less fortunate.
 3. It is not a mere visit and pat on the back but an effort to truly help someone with some type of aid.
 4. The idea here is that of continuous help for people such as this, not a one time deal and we are set for life.
- F. Those who are parentless and husbandless are to be helped when they are in need.
1. There are other passages that deal with what a widow indeed is and they come into play when making decisions on who to help.
 2. Orphans and those widows with no family who can or will support them are to be helped by Christians.
 3. This can be done by individual Christians or the congregation.

4. This is seen in the use of the phrase “my brethren” and the fact that the very next verse talks about the congregation gathering together.
- G. The second aspect of pure religion is keeping oneself unspotted from the world.
1. The idea is a continual keeping.
 2. You and I who are Christians have been called out of the world and set apart from it.
 3. We are to keep ourselves from being contaminated by the world.
 4. You can't play with dirt and not get dirty; you can't play with the world and not be worldly.
- H. Without both of these characteristics, charity and purity, there is no way to tell if one is truly a Christian or not.
1. Both of these are attributes of God.
 2. We are to be godly, thus we need these attributes in our lives.