

VAIN RELIGION

JAMES 1:26-27

Text: James 1:26-27

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²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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.

Introduction:

Is your eternal destiny or spirituality based on religion or a relationship?

We have both kinds listed here in our text.

I want us to consider whether or not we have “Vain Religion.”

We’ll consider two things from this passage.

Note First:

1. THE DANGER OF SUPERFICIAL RELIGION

James 1:26

²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

There are three dangers listed here.

Notice:

A. It Lacks Reality

Look at it: "If any man among you seem to be religious."

There are some many people who only have a form of godliness. They have a name that they live, but they are dead.

Their religion is only an illusion.

It's only something that seems to be, but there is no reality to it.

There's nothing more dangerous than religion without reality.

Too many who say that they are a Christian cannot say, "...I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

The problem with superficial religion is that it lacks reality.

Illustration:

There was a man, a church member, whose name was Mr. H. L. Cox, and he'd been a member of the church for years. But, he did not have that calm assurance that the choir spoke about awhile back. One day he made up his mind, I can take it no longer. I'm tired of playing church. I am tired of an illusion. My soul demands reality, and he found it in the Lord Jesus Christ and then he wrote this song.

Oh, how well do I remember how I doubted day by day,

For I did not know for certain that my sins were washed away;

When the Spirit tried to tell me, I would not the truth receive;

I endeavored to be happy and to make myself believe.

But, then I prayed to God in earnest, and not caring what men said;

I was hungry for the blessing; my poor soul, it must be fed;

Then at last by faith I touched Him, and like sparks from smitten steel,

Just so quick salvation reached me Oh, bless God, I know it's real!

But, it's real; it's real, I know it's real, Praise God, the doubts are settled,

For I know, I know it's real. (H. L. Cox)

Not only does superficial religion lack reality notice also:

B. It Lacks Restraint

Look again at verse 26.

James 1:26

²⁶ 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.

What is James saying? James is so very practical. James says, "If you have been saved, if you have been born again, if your religion is real, it's going to show in the way that you talk."

One of the prime marks that a person has been born again is his speech pattern.

You're going to find an individual who's been born again praising God, and witnessing.

You're going to find the person who's not been born again, you're going to find him criticizing, and carping, and you're going to find him cursing, and you're going to find him lying, and you're going to find him exaggerating.

Certainly, this is not the only area where we need restraint, but James uses the tongue as an illustration of the fact that when a man is saved, it changes his life.

Quote:

If your religion has not changed your life then you need to change your religion.

Notice also:

C. It Lacks Results

James is speaking about the dangers of superficial religion. And, he says number one: it lacks reality. Number two: it lacks restraint; it has no power to change a life. And, then thirdly, it lacks in results.

Note the word “vain.”

That word vain means fruitless, non-productive, and “exercise in futility.” You’re simply spinning your wheels. This religion can do you no good. It lacks in results. There is nothing to it. The sum total is nothing. It’s like a zero with the edges trimmed off. It is nothing, no good, and a waste of time.

So many people think there’s value in religion. Every now and then someone will stand up and say what we need is more religion in America. Not necessarily so. Most of the people in America are religious, but lost. They need to turn from religion to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Religion can be vain, empty, it lacks results.

Notice secondly:

2. THE DELIGHTS OF SUPERNATURAL RELIGION

James—very practical and very plain and powerfully speaks of the dangers of superficial religion.

Now James speaks of the delights of supernatural religion.

Note:

James 1:27

²⁷ 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.

A. It Reaches Upward to God

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...” It reaches upward to Heaven. It reaches upward to God. It recognizes God as Father.

B. It Reaches Outward

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction...” (James 1:27). When a man has been transformed, when a man has been saved, when a man has been born again, it is going to give to that man a heart of compassion. He’s going to reach out to those in distress.

Illustration:

The Lord told the parable of the Good Samaritan. You can read it in Luke 10 when you get home. But, He said there was man going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves. They left him wounded and dead, stripped, bleeding, dying. And a Levite, who was a very religious man, passed by on the other side, and a priest passed by. But, then a Samaritan, a despised person, part of a Mongrel race came. But, the Samaritan didn’t pass him by. The Samaritan knelt down by him and

gave him medication, and gave him encouragement, and finally the Samaritan put him on his beast, took him to an inn, took care of him.

There the Lord tells three philosophies of life that are in this city, and that are all over the world.

First of all there are the beater uppers. They're recognized, they're represented by these thieves. And, then there are the passer uppers, they're represented by the priest and the Levites who went by on the other side.

And, here was this poor man, down there in the ditch, and they were religious, but they passed him by. They left him there. There are the passer uppers and then there are the picker uppers. There's this Samaritan who came by and picked him up and ministered to him.

C. It Reaches Inward

Look again at verse 27:

James 1:27

²⁷ 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.

what does James mean when he says the world? He's not talking here about the physical planet earth. He's not talking about the world of nature. He's not even

talking about the world of men, for God loves the world of men. But, he's talking about an ungodly value system that the Bible calls the world—"...all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16), the Bible says.

1 John 2:15

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Close:

Is your religion in vain – superficial, or is it supernatural?