

The ***RICHES*** OF GRACE

“hath appeared to all men.” Titus 2:11

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December 2017

Pure Religion

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.

James 1:27

+ External Religious Service +

Pure Religion denotes external religious service; it is what a person does outwardly which reveals the inward work of the gospel by the Holy Spirit (**James 2:13-20; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13**). Religion has a practical side which is duty, works, and fruit (**James 1:13-27**). The context contrasts, between true religion and false religion (the pure versus the defiled). Pure Religion produces good works and changes the way we live. The word Religion is given a bad reputation. Some today will say, I'm not very religious or I don't care too much for religion. Others will say that Christianity is a relationship and not a religion. But, Christianity is a religion and the characteristics of Pure Religion are seen in Holy Scriptures.

This article will discuss the subject of Pure Religion in the context of **James 1:26-27**. This will not be an exhausted or complete definition. It is not the sum total of true religion, but it is a part of it. It is a way of life that is compatible with the Word of God. One author refers to our text in this manner: "The contrast is drawn between one whose religion consists of formal ceremonies that have no support in heart devotion, and the one whose religion consists of deeds of mercy because it flows from a right heart attitude to God." In our text in **James 1:25**, we have the perfect law of liberty which gives liberty to the soul and a perfect rule of life. It frees us from the slavery, guilt, and power of sin, and prescribes our obligations from God as Christians.

A CONTROLLED TONGUE

The first contrast is in **James 1:26**, where the tongue is mentioned in reference to a pure conversation, "*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.*" If the tongue is not restrained, our other evidence of religion is worthless. The tongue is the revealer of the heart. It is an accurate index of our spiritual condition. The tongue is a badge we wear, it identifies us. The word bridleth means to govern, restrain as a horse with a bridle. The individual who does not bridle his tongue deceiveth his own heart. That is, he supposes he is ok (better than he really is). Self-deception is the worst kind of deception. The following is a list of verses that deal with the tongue: (**Matthew 12:34-37; Matthew 15:19-20; Mark 7:16-21; Psalm 34:13; Psalm 39:1; Psalm 15:1-3**). The entire chapter of **James three** is a great commentary on the tongue. The following is a list of words associated with a corrupt tongue: slander, gossip, lying, deceit, insults, boasting, ridicule, malice, disrespect, backbiting, tale-bearing, threats, etc. Let each of us examine ourselves in light of the Word of God.

A CONCERN FOR OTHERS

In **James 1:27** we are told that Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction: "*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.*" We are to help those who cannot help themselves. Many take advantage of the destitute and defenseless, but the Christian is to come to their aid. The word visit means to help, to show pity, to support. It is to extend a hand, to be benevolent. It is an act of charity, mercy and humble piety. The religion that does not prove itself this way is not of God. To visit is not a social call with coffee and donuts in our text. It is like a doctor visiting the sick to attend to their needs. The widows and orphans are spoken of often in Holy Scriptures (**Isaiah 1:16-17; Isaiah 58:6-7; Psalm 68:7; Deuteronomy 15:11, 10:17,19; Exodus 22:21-24; Proverbs 23:10; Proverbs 28:27; Job 6:27; Mark 10:21**). In **Matthew 25:4,40**, a true sign of being a follower of Christ is to visit the poor, and the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10:25-37** showed his concern for the helpless.

I believe that defending the unborn baby in the womb is included in **Proverbs 24:11-12**: "*If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*" In **Acts 10:38**, Jesus is our greatest example of going about doing good, "*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*"

A CONSECRATED LIFE

In **James 1:27**, we are told that Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: . . . "*and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*" There is to be charity in our Christian walk. The word unspotted means to be unstained, free from spot, or unblemished. A spot is a stain, mark, blot, discolor, fault, or blemish.

The word world in our text is not the trees, mountains, or birds, but it is that organized system led by Satan in rebellion against God. John Wesley said: "The world is anything that cools my love for Jesus." It refers to the world's beliefs, values, morals, ideologies, philosophies, attitudes, and entertainment. In **James 4:4**, we are told that we cannot be a friend of God and the world at the same time: "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*" There are many Scriptures in the Bible that warn us of the world (**Luke 8:11-15; John 15:18-**

21; II Corinthians 4:4; I Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 2:2; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 6:14). In **I John 2:15-17**, there are three divisions that make up the world in which we are tempted:

The first is the Lust of the Flesh which has to do with the world's pleasures (**Galatians 5:19-23; Matthew 7:21-23; I Peter 2:11**)

The second is the Lust of the Eyes which has to do with the things we behold or see and long for and covet after (**I Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-11; Colossians 3:5; Genesis 19:26; Exodus 20:17**).

The third is the Pride of Life which refers to sins of the mind and heart and is the most heinous. This includes our accomplishments, talents, pedigree, titles, positions, prestige, trying to outshine others, and to be number one. Pride keeps sinners from salvation and saints from service. It is the source and root of all other sins. Please notice a quote by another author on the wickedness of pride: "Sensuality is corruption of the lower part of man's being that sinks him to the level of beast, but pride is the corruption of the highest part of his nature lifting up his understanding and spirit against God, and enters into fellowship with the devil." In **Acts 2:42**, we are to continue in the apostle's doctrine: "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" And according to **I Corinthians 16:13-14**, we are to hold fast to the faith. **Ephesians 6:14-15** says we are to stand with our loins girt with the truth. **II Timothy 1:13** tells us we are to hold fast to sound doctrine, and in **II Timothy 4:3** we are given the warning that the time will come when some will not endure sound doctrine. The doctrine of Christ is to be believed and obeyed.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, let us strive to maintain a Pure Religion before our God and Savior. Also, let us define Pure Religion according to Scripture and not by any other standard. This is pleasing to our Heavenly Father. Amen.

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*"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31*