

God's Word – God's Desired Result (#21)

Text : **James 1: 19-27** (Esp. **26-27**)

INTRODUCTION :

A. How do you view yourself ? How do you view this church ?

1. Few people would view their church as wicked or false or anything negative.
2. I would dare say that no one in this audience views himself as sacrilegious.

B. Do you view yourself as being a religious person ? Why ?

1. Are you religious because you :
 - a. Faithfully attend church every week ?
 - b. Believe in the correct doctrines ?
 - c. Pray and read the bible every day ?
2. All of these are important, but in and of themselves, they do not make one truly religious.
 - a. If we perceive ourselves as religious, we will do all of these things.
 - b. If we do these things, others will view us as being religious people.

C. Our text tells us what to do to become religious and how to know when we are.

1. Vs. **21** ... We must put away all that stands between us and God. (**wickedness**)
2. Vs. **21b** ... We must receive the word of God into our heart. (**implant it**)
3. Vs. **22** ... We must actively apply the word of God to our lives. (**be doers**)
4. Vs. **23-25** ... We must live with a constant awareness of the word. (**not forgetting**)
5. Vs. **26-27** ... We must allow the word to change the way we think and we live.
 - a. Bridle our tongues
 - b. Care for the helpless
 - c. Seek to live holy lives

From our text, we will learn that it is only when we have allowed the word to have this effect on our lives that we will be religious “in the sight our God and Father.”

James 1: 26-27 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man'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.

I. One cannot become religious in God's eyes separate and apart from His word.

A. Our text specifies the process by which one becomes religious.

1. Vs. 19 ... He opens his heart to become receptive to the word.
 - a. He is slow to speak. ... He does not always have to advocate what he thinks.
 - b. He controls his emotions. ... Anger is a negative reaction. (*life under control*)
2. Vs. 21 ... He makes an active commitment to holiness.
 - a. "Putting aside all filthiness" ... There is a decision followed by actions.
 - b. "All that remains of wickedness" ... The decision is an ongoing commitment.
3. Vs. 21b ... **humility** ... He changes his attitude toward God and toward His word.
 - a. The one who lives in sin is in rebellion, following his own will.
 - b. In order to become religious, one must submit his will, i.e., **humble** himself to receive instruction from God via His word.

B. The word of God can only make one religious if it grows in one's heart.

1. Vs. 21c ... The word must be "**implanted**" into ones heart.
 - a. When the word is just heard, it is easily forgotten.
 - b. Scientists claim the average person doesn't retain more than 10% of what he hears.
2. Being "**implanted**" indicates that the word is in ones heart to stay.
 - a. Something that is implanted continues to grow.
 - b. Obviously growth requires more than just hearing sermons, reading, etc.
3. Jesus illustrated this process with the "*Parable of the Sower.*"
 - a. Summarize ... **Luke 8: 4-15**
 - b. **Luke 8: 15-** **But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.**
 - c. Notice that two things are true of the word in the good heart.
 - 1) Effort is put forth to retain the word. "**hold it fast**"
 - 2) It has a continuing positive effect. "**bear fruit with perseverance**"

C. Three things must happen in order for the word to be implanted and bear fruit.

1. The heart must be prepared to receive the word. *Humility tills the soil, the heart.*
2. The word must be received. (**Rom. 10: 17** ... Faith comes ONLY by hearing.)
3. The word must be held on to. *One must dwell on the word, meditate on it.*

II. As the implanted word produces fruit, it changes its environment.

A. The word of God is holy.

1. The scriptures are revelation from Jesus Christ.
 - a. **I Cor. 15:3**
 - b. **Gal. 1: 11-12**
 - c. **Eph. 3: 1-5 -cf- II Pet. 3: 14-16**
2. That which proceeds from God is Holy.

B. Holiness and evil cannot dwell together, one eliminates the other.

1. Thus, when the word of God dwells within one's heart, evil must leave.
2. **Psalms 119: 11- Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.**

C. One who has humbly received the word into his heart will be changed by it.

1. He will become different from the world.
 - a. **Eph. 5: 7-8** **Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (cf. - Acts 26: 16)**
 - b. When one becomes a child of light in a world of darkness, values change so his life changes.
Eph. 5: 9- for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth (God in your heart)
2. The one in whom holy word dwells seeks to be holy.
 - a. **Vs. 21c- to keep oneself unstained by the world.**
 - b. Though he remains in the world, he refuses to be of the world. **John 17: 14-16**

D. Do you consider yourself religious ?

1. The word "**religious**" (*threskos*) is used only once in the N.T.
 - a. The Greeks defined it as : **1.** fearing or worshipping God. **2.** to tremble.
 - b. However, God gives it a deeper meaning.
2. God defines being religious as a lifestyle which abstains from worldly influences.
 - a. In the battle between good and evil (*light and darkness*) he has chosen sides.
 - b. **James 4: 4- You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**
 - c. Each must ask himself, **Does God consider you religious ?**

III. One who is considered religious by God is one who is in control of his tongue.

A. One's tongue is the most difficult thing to keep unspotted from the world.

1. **James 3: 2-** For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.
2. The ability of a person to keep his tongue in check is directly related to whether or not God accepts his worship.
 - a. **Vs. 26-** If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.
 - b. **"Religion"** is defined as : 1. religious worship. 1A esp. external, that which consists of ceremonies. 1A1 religious discipline, religion.

B. Some religious people are not accepted by God. (Viewed religious by self & peers)

1. Our text tells us that some people **"thinks himself to be religious."**
2. However, their view of themselves is in error; they are self-deceived ... **"deceives his own heart."**
3. Their religious acts (**religion**) are not accepted by God.
4. Their rejection is due to the use of their tongue, i.e., **unloving toward others.**

C. The tongue is the window to the heart.

1. **Luke 6: 45-** The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.
2. **THEREFORE :** Our text teaches us that :
 - a. External acts cannot substitute for a devoted heart.
 - b. True worship flows from the heart. (**No heart = No worship**)
John 4: 24- God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
3. Those who cannot love those whom God has created cannot love God.
 - a. **I John 4: 20-** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.
 - b. One who cannot control his tongue has a heart that is not devoted.
 - c. God will not accept the worship of those who do not love Him or His children.

* **When the devil sneaks into our hearts, we must never let him speak with our tongue.**

IV. The religion that is accepted by God is that which lives lovingly.

A. The one who loves God, will manifest the love of God in his lifestyle.

1. God's greatest manifestation of love came when man was at war against Him.
 - a. **Rom. 5: 6-10**
 - b. Even when Man deserved wrath, Jesus died to save us.
2. Christians are instructed to cultivate that same attitude within themselves.

Phil. 2: 5-7 ... Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ...
3. We are instructed to give the same care to our neighbor as to ourselves. **Mk 12:31**

B. Our text instructs us that in order to practice pure religion we must help of the helpless.

1. Widows and orphans (*fatherless*) symbolized helplessness.
 - a. There was no government safety net.
 - b. Without a man to provide for them they were destitute.
 - c. Women did not have the freedom to work and to own as women do now.
2. Unscrupulous men would exploit their misfortune. (**Mk 12: 40- widows' houses**)
 - a. Without a husband or father they had no protection.
 - b. They could end up as slaves or worse.
3. It is that same way in much of the world today. (*Child sex traffic*)

C. From the very beginning the church has taken care of the helpless.

1. **Acts 6** ... Deacons were appointed to care for the church's widows.
2. **I Tim. 5: 9-16** ... Qualifications were given for a widow to qualify for assistance.
 - a. Long term and well organized work of the church.
 - b. It was commonly practiced in congregations other than Jerusalem.

D. To “visit” the helpless does not mean to stop by for a social call.

1. The word “*episkeptomai*” is defines as : to look upon in order to help or to benefit. *1B1* to look after, have care for, provide for ... (*Same root word as elder*)
2. This same word is used of God coming to care for His people. **Luke 7: 16 et al**

* Thus, one who is truly religious will actively care for those who are helpless.

- a. A congregation is a group of Christians.
- b. What the individual parts of a group must do, the whole group must do.
- c. Therefore, a religious church must care for the helpless. (cf. **Gal. 6: 10**)

CONCLUSION :**A. Are we religious ? Individually ? ... collectively ?**

1. Historically men have established standards to judge their religions.
 - a. The Pharisees were strongly condemned for the standards they set.
 - b. The Lord's Apostle warned us not to do likewise ;

II Cor. 10: 12- For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

2. God does not accept the standards commonly set by man.
 - a. We does not measure a man's religion by the number of church services attended.
* *One who does not attend the assemblies of the church is not religious.*
 - b. He does not measure a man's religion by his doctrinal purity.
* *No one would dispute that a religious person will seek to obey God in all things.*
 - c. God does not measure a man's religion on prayers said and chapters read.
* *One cannot be religious who does not read, meditate on God's word and pray.*

B. God defines the pure religion which HE accepts as being :

A faith that so permeates a man's heart that it ...

1. causes him to practice holy living.
2. changes his conversation.
3. pours forth the love of God on even the weak and helpless.

C. The religion that God accepts is one that's lived.

1. It is not just a belief system. (*Though it does contain a belief system.*)
2. It is not just performing acts of worship. (*Though acts of worship are performed.*)
3. It is a sanctified way of living in the presence of God.

INVITATION :