

DON'T BE DECEIVED (Part 5)

“...about the Essence of True Religion

INTRO: Satan's plan from the Garden has been to deceive us as Christians. It's been a good plan. To the naïve and unaware it is a real danger. Scripture identifies specific areas of possible deception: our salvation, the goodness of God, the importance of listening and doing (consistent obedience), and ...

TODAY: Don't be deceived about the Essence of True Religion. Our third and final from James 1:26-27.

“RELIGION” (3xs) – Not all religion is acceptable to God (Gen. 4:1-16). This idea shocks many religious people who can't imagine that their efforts would not be enough to please God. In fact, you could end up wasting your time (go fishing!). The “religion” James mentions has two possibilities: “worthless” or invaluable “pure and undefiled.” False vs True. False is verbal and external and not heart-motivated. The true begins internally and works its way out. True religion is evidenced by three actions: controlled mouth, compassionate heart, and a clean life.

I. A CONTROLLED MOUTH (v. 26)

Speech is index to the heart. Average person speaks about 16,000 words/day (women 500 more/day!)... Warning of Jesus (Matt. 12:34-35). The mouth speaks what is in the heart.

James at least a dozen times addresses all kinds of speech problems: hypocritical, hostile, slander, quarrels, judging, selfish praying, boasting, etc. ch. 3:1-12. We sin in so many ways with our mouth. Social media has increased the danger of uncontrolled speech. If you think you are religious, but you gossip, lie, slander, embellish ... you're deceived! Pro. 18:21

Tongue must be “bridled.” He didn't say muzzled. But it must be reined in and controlled if we seek to practice true religion. Listen to James in the power of our tongue (3:1-12). True maturity comes when you are able to master your mouth. MacArthur quote: “Even though the ritual might be evangelical, even though the ceremony might be biblical, it's as futile as pagan idolatry unless the heart is right. So it's the doing but with a right heart. It's a deception to think that if I read the Bible, go to church, pray, give money, sing songs, that's enough. You want to know if you're doing is right, check your tongue.”

II. A COMPASSIONATE HEART (v.27a)

- A. Compassion, mercy, and love are Christian distinctives (Jam. 2:14-18; Matt. 5:7; Jn. 13:34-35; 1 Jn. 2:8-11; 3:15-18; 4:7-12). It is sacrificial and often inconvenient.
- B. “Orphans and widows” represent some of the most vulnerable and needy in any society. They usually cannot return any favor. God has always had a special place in his heart for orphans and widows (Exo. 22:22; Isa. 1:17; Zech. 7:10). To “visit” is more than a social call. You go to help!
- C. True religion sees the pain of those around them and selflessness moves to meet that need (Matt. 25:35-40).

III. A CLEAN LIFE (v. 27b)

- A. We live in a dirty world—morally and spiritually filthy—and if not careful, it will stain you. It is a good thing we are in the world. It is a bad thing when the world gets in us.
- B. Worldliness is a desire that always leads to compromise (Jam. 4:4; Rom 12:1-2). We can't avoid it. It is all around us. But, we can be wise and vaccinate ourselves so we can be less susceptible (COVID).
- C. Vaccination – Regular dose of Bible, Prayer, and Obedience.

CONC: James gives us three tests to protect us against deceiving ourselves about true religion (biblical Christianity).