

Religion May Be Vain or Pure and undefiled
(James 1:26-27)

Introduction:

1. In our lesson we are concentrating on some principles that relate to 2 kinds of religion: one is "*vain*," and the other is "*pure and undefiled*."
2. Since our study is based on James 1:26-27, so let us first examine . . .

Discussion:

- I. THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THESE VERSES APPEAR
 - A. We learn from vs.18 that God wants His children to "*be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures*."
 - B. To accomplish this, we must follow the instructions given in vs.19-25.
 1. (vs.19-20) We must "*be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*."
 2. (vs.21) We must put away wickedness and receive the engrafted Word with meekness.
 3. (vs.22-25) We must be doers of the Word.
 - C. The way we approach these instructions will determine the kind of religion we practice: "*vain*" or "*pure and undefiled*."
- II. (vs.26) JAMES DESCRIBED "VAIN RELIGION"
 - A. Vain: useless, worthless, serving no purpose
 - B. "Vain religion" is of no value to the person practicing it, it is of no value to other people, and it is of no value to God.
 - C. James showed that a person may appear to be religious while practicing vain religion -- such a person deceives his own heart.
 - D. The specific problem addressed is a failure to bridle the tongue (see 3:2-12).
 1. Bridle: to hold in check, to restrain
 2. A person with an unbridled tongue shows that he has not received the engrafted Word with meekness.
 3. Religion that is accompanied by an unbridled tongue is vain.
 - E. According to 2 Thessalonians 3:11, one thing that can contribute to an unbridled tongue is a lack of activity.
 1. Paul continued in 2 Thessalonians 3:12-13 by showing how being active is a good way to keep the tongue bridled.
 2. This principle leads us to the next point.
- III. (vs.27) JAMES DESCRIBED "PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION"
 - A. In contrast to vain religion, pure and undefiled religion is a blessing to the person practicing it, it is a blessing to other people, and it pleases God.
 - B. Pure and undefiled religion consists of 2 main activities.
 1. One activity is "*to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*."
 - a. Visit: to provide the needs of those who are less fortunate, as illustrated in Ruth 1:6.
 - b. Caring for the needy demonstrates:
 - 1) true faith (James 2:14-17)
 - 2) true love (1 John 3:17-19).
 2. The other activity is remaining "*unspotted from the world*."
 - a. This has already been mentioned in vs.21a.
 - b. To practice the kind of religion that pleases God, we must not allow ourselves to be tainted by the world (Romans 12:1-2).

Conclusion:

1. It is sad, but religion is not important to many people today.
2. Religion is certainly important to God, and He wants it to be important to us.
3. However, God will not accept any kind of religion.
4. He wants His children to:
 - a. avoid "vain" religion
 - b. practice "pure and undefiled religion."
5. Let us examine ourselves regularly to make sure that we are practicing the right kind of religion.