

PURE RELIGION

James 1:1-27

INTRODUCTION:

Prelude to a primary matter.

James, was a leader in the church at Jerusalem. There, now, I've settled the authorship ~~of~~ one sentence!

James the brother of our Lord, there is no doubt about his leadership in Jerusalem. As evidenced in Acts 12:17, 15; Gal. 2:9-12.

Speaks of himself as a bond-slave -- a worshipper purchased by Christ from the market of sin. He would gladly serve him forever as a servant. He was ready to do anything and all things his Lord might call upon him to do. This is a must-in Christian leadership.

Salutations from whom -- James

To whom - 12 Tribes - the whole, Israel in completeness, of the dispersion - Jewish people, Christians, scattered abroad. (Sow)

James was qualified to proclaim to the world the Gospel because of his grasp of the basic character of Christianity. He knew how to approach difficult questions.

In chapter one his concern is a primary matter - pure religion. This is ever a primary matter.

Dr. W. L. Lumpkin, during our Mission Study on Baptist Work in the Middle East focused attention upon Moselm Religion. The gathering of religious ideas and putting certain beliefs together forming Allah is God and Mohammed is Prophet.

Some in our time compare various cults about them and work out a formula for religion.

I heard a Negro Bishop said "this is dangerous - mixing a little from one can and a little from another. You wind up with tomain poison".

James says pure religion is a way of life that grows out of one's loving response to the Lord Jesus. It is Christ's mastery over one's life. It is total full response.

I discuss this primary matter under three general points. First, patience through testings. Second, the powerful word, and Third, personal purity.

I I. Pure Religion Works Patience Through Testings - V. 2-15

(1.) Problem of divers trials - V. 2.

"My Brothers" - used not in national sense but spiritual one. Obviously a favorite expression of James. At least 17 times (1:2, 9, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14, 15; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19)

"Temptations" - meaning is trials or tests.

School children are familiar with tests. Had a test in Geography or test in Science.

They have divers test - one child has one kind of test and another. They have the test at different times.

They are given tests to find out what he knows - to see if he can pass or not.

Problem is that we are surrounded - trials reappear, repeated - Job, submerged in trials.

Your real character is tested. Soon determine what kind of Christian you are. Coach, try outs, athletic.

What is proper attitude toward these tests? Now is your opportunity - chance to win. Life is a contest.

"Joy" - count or consider it "whole joy" or "un-mixed joy". Phil. 2:29. Not just some joy. Literally when trials fall all around, you are surrounded with testings - usually, I count it all joy when I escape trials, tribulations, testings.

How do you react to testings or trouble? We look upon the other person and thank God we have been delivered - ^{one}some_A has said - "It is just possible - according to James - that they are to be envied and we are to be pitied".

James appeals to us to receive any and every trial as a way of development in Christian living.

Richard H. Seume wrote an article on "The Blessing of Irritations". Life on earth would not be worth much if every source of irritation were removed. He noted the wisdom of the oyster. In taking a bit of sand and making it into a pearl. What a store of pearls we may have, if we will".

"Joy" under fire - Paul and Silas - "count it a joy to sing praises - backs bleeding, feet held fast in stocks".

→ (2.) Product of Faith - V. 3-4.

The perfect work spoken of in those verses is the product of faith.

V. 3 - Your faith like gold stands the test of fire and is approved as standard.

Faith - very foundation of pure religion - genuine element of faith - good through trials. Faith works patience - staying power - common word for remaining under - proving your faith works patience. The quality of steadfastness, not surrendering to the inevitable that is merely acceptance without complaint. Quality of sticking through thick and thin, hot and cold, not a quitter.

Faith then is something that works - produces something. The product is patience. Faith bears fruit.

G. Coleman Luck (Moody Colportage Library) tells of young minister, realizing he lacked patience, once asked an older man of God to pray. That he might have more patience. The aged man knelt beside his young brother and began to pray that God would send trouble, trials, difficulties upon the youth. After a while the young man tapped the older minister and whispered - "you misunderstood me. I asked that you would pray that I might have more patience, not more trouble". The old man replied: The Scripture says, tribulation worketh patience. This is the only way.

This being true --

V. 4 - It takes this to make us perfect, entire, lacking in nothing. God means for us to have an all around development. Goal of the Christian. Perfected all over - conformed to image of Christ. Sooner or later these trials will come to an end "But you must let endurance come to its perfect product, so that you may be fully developed and perfectly equipped" - (Williams). We need a church full of folks like that. Goal of every baby is that it will grow to adulthood.

Not mean we put up with trials or that we are satisfied, but we have endurance. Accept them in an attitude of God working through each trial.

→ (3.) Prayer for Wisdom - V. 5-8

V. 5 - James has talked of completeness, lacking nothing, He continues what he has in mind by pointing out a weak spot.

If any man under stress and strain says "I don't know what to do", "I don't know how to get through this".

He is destitute, has a shortage of wisdom! No greater need - when passing through deep trials of affliction - when we have been wronged, when we suffer - if a man lacks wisdom - has a shortage of, as in banking.

What is he to do?

"Let him ask of God". He will not fail - never has failed to give generously.

Not knowledge - college graduate.

Wisdom know how to live in this world and would in the world to come. Situations arise and Bible tells us how to go about getting it.

Pray for it?

Wise men and astrologers knew much, but Joseph had wisdom.

Worldly wise men of Babylon knew much, but Daniel had wisdom.

God says - I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent". I Cor. 1:19.

Whenever a man like Einstein denies God he places himself on the side that cannot win.

A Christian does not obtain his wisdom from men like Plato, Aristotle but from his Lord!

God will liberally give, unconditionally, graciously wisdom that he may do right.

Some say use your common sense - James says ask God.

Most of the trouble comes upon our churches for lack of wisdom on the part of the people and Pastor. Endless confusion and strife.

"Upbraideth Not" - God will not reproach you, men may scold us, God never scolds.

Ask a man for wisdom - he replies "You made your bed so lie in it".

V. 6 - Some fellow says, I ask God but I did not get wisdom.

But let him ask in faith nothing doubting. Belief in and reliance on Christ.

Nothing wavering - like a wave of the sea driven with the wind - tossed.

V. 7 - Distrust condemns us and offends God. It dooms our prayers.

V. 8 - It shows a double - divided - instability of purpose - driven by every shifting wind. Tossed by restless sea. Double minded - as Bunyans - Mr. Facing both ways. Staggering - reeling - seeking wisdom from false teachers.

Why do we doubt? We have no reason too. Shifting, today wants to believe, tomorrow uncertain.

→ (4.) Poverty and Riches - V. 9-11.

James here notes how material things, prosperity in the world may also have bearing upon pure religion. If lack of wisdom is a weak spot, then beware of another pitfall.

V. 9 - Brother of low degree is to rejoice. Most Christians complain if they cannot get ahead. Why? Human appraisal - In Christ the Believer possesses more than the wealthiest. Men find it easier to rejoice when wealth comes, than when it goes.

God needs the poor - don't calculate in dollars - boast in humility.

Drawn - as a fish out of his retreat. Lust - lure - desire. Internal.
Enticement - external - enemy without. Desire may not be evil - may be natural
appetite, Snare.

V. 15 - The installment plan. Lust when conceived, conception takes place,
brings forth as a mother, or fruit from seed.

Sin at Birth is equipped for its career. Rom. 6:6. Brings forth death!

Inevitable consequences of sin. Lust - sin - death.

II. Pure Religion Is Founded In The Powerful Word - V. 16-25.

(1) Preventing Error - V. 16.

V. 16 - James says be certain God is not responsible for your wrong doing, just the
contrary is true.

Don't be mis-led or be mistaken about these things - some cast all caution to
the winds hoping God will show mercy. God not tempt men.

(2) Perfect Gift - V. 17

V. 17 - Perfect gift comes from a personal God. He is author of all - that is good.
Wrong comes from Satan.

Gift - "act of giving". Thought here is beautiful. Both the act of giving and
the gift are good. When God gives, he has no motive such as giving to receive
again. No thought of returns.

Gift is from above. Expression as Nicodemus - "From above" - John 3:3. New
birth.

Father of lights - author of light of lights. Creator of sun, moon, stars
perfect gifts from him. Eph. 1:17, Mal. 4:2.

No variableness - no changeableness - no vacillating, veering.

May observe some changes in lights in heaven, but never in God - no shadow
of turning (darkness and light shadows of heaven).

James must have had the rich and poor in the church. Poverty is a test
of faith.

V. 10 - Rich - Boast in humble spirit. Not proud. Wealth is a test of faith
- is it a weak spot - greedy - harden in heart.

Like a flower of the grass - illustration for both poor and rich. Demonstration
of faith. It grows to ripeness and flowers. Christian experience.

V. 11 - Sun - heat - withereth - figurative. Death comes and every thing the poor
man and rich man possess will be left behind as fading flower.

→ (5.) Promised Crown - V. 12

V. 12 - Pronounces the blessing of God on the man that stands the test, as in
V. 2. (No solicitation to do wrong).

Having endured trials, real temptations he is approved - good gold.

Crown - honourable ornament - I Cor. 9:25. To the patient one who endures.
(Whether blind, paralyzed, or shut-in) crown of life.

→ (6.) Pin-Pointing the source of other testings - V. 13-15.

James interjects an admonition.

V. 13 - No man should ever blame God.

No man when he is tested or even tempted to do evil should charge it up to
God. Human weakness to hold everyone accountable - Adam excused himself. Eve
excused herself. Finally they blamed God. Choice was there - God not compel Adam
or Eve to eat - he forbade them.

God cannot be tempted - he himself tempts no one - righteous.

A tempter of evil must himself be open to evil temptations. Man not blame
God for his dishonesty. Satan calculated wrongly when he urged that Jesus would
sin.

Man blames their faults on environment and God - James says is not correct.
God gives power to overcome temptations.

V. 14 - James says temptations come from within. A result of our own evil.

→ (3.) Power of the Word - V. 18

Repeating the metaphor of birth - V. 15. God set his purpose and deliberately acted. By the word, by the new birth, begat us. A kind of first fruits (term of O. T. people brought 1st of harvest).

Greatest asset of pure religion, God's plan by the word of truth, salvation becomes God's work.

God fashioned redemption by his own will. The instrument of regeneration. "Word of truth" - Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We can't say too much about God's Word - no substitutes for teaching and preaching God's word! Quick living. I Thess. 2:13.

Bible is a life-giving book.

First fruits - acknowledging that it all came from the Lord.

→ (4.) Pressing for Acceptance of the word - V. 19-21

V. 19 - May be accomplished by ¹paying attention to the word.

Wherefore - refers to something that has gone before. Here is a test of one's attitude towards the word of God. James will note two ways this is shown. 1. Hearing and 2. Obeying.

This is not an exceptional case but a universal experience. Of all the test - response to the word comes first. It is this which makes a person a Christian. Reveals your attitude to God.

Are you interested in what God has to say? Is the Bible stale or fresh.

Be swift - alertness in receiving the word of truth. There are a multitude of attractions men are ready and eager to hear.

As David longed for a drink of water out of the spring by the gate of Bethlehem.

As most of us like things cooked like "our mothers used to make".

Swift - eager for the word of God like hungry children that hurry to the table. Like fish taking the bait as the hook touches the water.

2 people listen to a Gospel sermon - one, great joy, good for my soul.
Other, the same old thing, nothing new, wish he would quit.

Is there a "burning in the heart" when the Scripture are opened.

Be Slow - God gave us 2 ears and one mouth! Twice as swift to hear as we are to speak. Listen and learn.

Don't speak too quickly, we answer, before we know what we are talking about. Be sure you understand the word.

This is aimed against violent ~~and~~ disputations-speech 3:1-12 (Robertson)

Some men are blighted with the craving to be instantly chattering. To refrain the lips not easy.

Slow to wrath - don't be in a big hurry to express your opinion, have proper reverence for the word - and don't get mad about it.

Word of God is painful, it hurts, hits the diseased place in your life -- Preacher talked about me, I'll never go to hear him again. If reading and preaching the word of God has that effect on you there is something wrong in you and you need to correct it.

Anger often expresses itself in action - damage that is irreparable.

V. 20 - Personal Anger - It seems at times some Christians get so mad you would think they had the Devil in them.

Anger does not help the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you get angry when hearing the word preached you do not help the Kingdom. Jesus said "They shall put you out of the Synagogues; yea the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service". God requires you to be righteous and anger will not help in this matter.

V. 21 - Planted Word (engrafted)

To accomplish God's righteousness putting away anger, filthiness, naughtiness and plant the word of God in your souls.

"Everything impure" must go (Williams)

Filthiness - dirty, soiled garment, failure in morals.

Naughtiness - we think of this as mild or juvenile. Old English: general idea

of wickedness, thought and deed.

We must part with anything which the WORD condemns. Some things must go if the word of God is to come in. Like the fluted neck funnel used by the farmer to pour cane syrup into jugs - air must escape if syrup is to go in.

Meekness - contrast with superfluity, we are to receive the word of God as authoritative and final. Don't try to explain it away or argue with it. Just take it as it is.

Implanted word is able to save your souls. This means to save the whole life. Rooted - sown in the heart.

Many things we need to be saved from, even after we become Christians.

Figure of grafting. Christian is infused by the word of God with meekness and salvation. Bible no where appeals to the sinner to change his habits in order to be saved. The sinner must first come to Christ, confess his sin and receive salvation's free gift.

→ (5.) Performing the Word - V. 22-25

V. 22 - Doers - main business, performing.

Deceiving - think you have fooled someone else, pulled the wool over your own eyes. The Minister invites you to church (already a member) you scratch your head for an excuse, finally scratch up a lie. You don't deceive the pastor - you delude yourself.

Christians should be known as doers, of God's word - business, home, etc.

Christian life is continuous - we cheat and defraud ourselves.

V. 23-24 - Illustration of mirror.

Natural face - that which he is born with. Purpose of mirror is to reflect what is imaged in it.

Interesting to notice he uses the word for man. A group studying this, and a woman said it was because "a woman wouldn't go away and forget". And this reply came from a man, "A woman wouldn't see her natural face if she looked into a mirror".

I don't know the reason, but give you what James said. Hearer who forgets

and hearer who does. Does not cost much to listen to the Gospel, no action is required.

V. 25 - Bible is here spoken of as a mirror.

Intended to show us just how we look in the sight of God. Called perfect law - shows what we are - V. 18.

Not just glance into but carefully gaze into the Word.

Don't miss the point James is concerned with how a man behaves. Hearers are sifted from the doers. Hear - not get deeper than the skin, as looking in the mirror.

Get a close look at the Gospel, let it become a force in your life - obey the Gospel!

This man shall be blessed - Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-11)
Blessed is a word translated happy - as V. 2. Pure joy. God's reward. Marked by what you do.

III. Pure Religion promoted by Personal Purity - V. 26-27

(1.) Pharisaic Religion condemned - V. 26.

V. 26 - Seem to be religious - thinketh.

Fails to practice what he has learned of the word of God. Case of "seemeth to be religious but bridleth not his tongue".

Religious service is vain - no account. Not that he has no religion, but his religious efforts do no good, profitless, empty, fruitless.

Sad - church member - consider themselves religious - may even read the Bible some. But he cannot control his tongue, speaks hatefully of the church and others, slightest provocation speaks negative gossip. (Treated Ch. 3).

Judged by way walk and way you talk!

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth - Eph. 4:29.

The church member with a rotten tongue, foul mouth filled with falsehoods -
a gossip has only a seeming religion, not pure. Are you guilty of spreading

Truth here: The unbridled Tongue is a symptom of an unregenerated heart.

This is to say The whisperer of tales is not a powerful, important person in the know whose reports are circulated as authoritative.

Instead, the gossip should be considered an emotionally sick individual who should be pitied, but who is dangerous; The rumor spreader can permanently twist the mind of an impressionable person, separate friends, destroy a home, & do irreparable damage to the fellowship of a church. Sometimes it takes years for a church to get over injury caused by a handful of gossips, & sometimes a church never fully recovers.

If you are a transmitter of gossips, let me talk to you a moment. You are not only causing problems, but you have a problem - you are accountable to God, you have a problem. You have an emotional problem,

you need Three things - First, try to understand yourself better. There are ways to feel your worth. Building up the church will give you a far greater sense of importance than tearing down the church.

Second, you need to Repent. An unbridled tongue is a sin. Only way take care of sin is Repentance - God will forgive you, if you are really sorry.

Third, you need to ask God's help to overcome the habit of Gossip. Rumor spreading is just like any other bad habit, it is hard to break, People become quite skilled in the art of slander & undermining. They learn to walk the tight-rope between truth & untruth with poise. By means of a question, an expression, a comment they plant poisoned darts!

A Christian should avoid being vulnerable to gossip; a wise mature Christians will not allow themselves to be swept up in a gossip campaign - He checks reports with reliable sources & does not transmit untrue information.

idle, groundless rumors, telling scandalous stories you have heard - James says, underscore - "James says, "That man's religion is vain". His religion is just external - comes to nothing.

→ (2) Pure religion commended - V. 27.

V. 27 - Here is best way put in practice what we have learned from the Word.

It is a pure, unmixed religious service before God.

A test of faith is charity. Orphans - fatherless. Widows.

Visit suggest care for, look after, practical demonstration. Something Christians ought to do. You have time for social visits, but few take time to take the blessing of the Gospel to those in need. Demonstrate your religion is true!

Another test of religion - "Keep himself unspotted from the world". Most important and hard to execute - world full of dirt, keep yourself pure (not security of believer) do not conform nor love the world. Have Christ like concern and cease religious inconsistencies. Personal Purity is the key in pure religion!

Brilliant, Talleyrand, a figure in French Revolution. Was approached by young man with opinion world needed a new religion. He asked this leader how to proceed.

Very simple said Talleyrand, "All one has to do is to get oneself crucified and then rise on the third day".

The world is filled with religions. James concludes the pure religion is based on the powerful Word of God and Christians must match this with pure living.

Judge Clement F. Haynsworth, Jr. Lost 55-45 seat on Supreme Court.
10th Nomination in history to be rejected by Senate, Labor & Civil Rights groups
Pointed to spots in Judicial Ethics.
None accused him of corruption, dishonesty, But they Argued that he had failed to keep himself clear of even the appearance of unethical conduct, (va. Pilot)