



"Pure and Undeclared Religion"

"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undeclared religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:26, 27).

WHERE there is danger in "religions" there is safety and benefit from pure and undeclared religion. Pure and undeclared religion is free from any admixture of error and any contamination of the world. It is not separated from its original form, nor is its strength and vigor impaired. We may reach some conclusions:

Any religion that has not come down from heaven cannot be pure. Heaven is an undeclared place, and only pure religion can get one there (1 Pet. 1:3–5). It really does matter if one's religion is from heaven or men (Mk. 11:27–33).

Any religion that is not within Christ's priesthood cannot be pure (Heb. 7:20–8:2). In nearly every ancient society and religion there have been those who served in some kind of priest-like capacity. All these religions cry out for some kind of priest which administers on behalf of man to higher realms. Yet all these religions and priests have only one thing in common—all who served died and left the work to another. Yet Christianity is superior to the religions of the world in that it is unique in having God come to die for man in order to reclaim him to Himself (see also Acts 17:16–19). Likewise, only Christianity has an enduring priesthood, which is never left to another to serve!

Any religion that has no purifying effect on the whole man cannot be pure. Hence any religion that a man has which lacks the force to even bridle the tongue is displayed as utterly weak (Jas. 1:26). Pure religion therefore moves in three directions:

1. It reaches upward because it exists "before God the Father." It recognizes that all things are naked and open before Him (Heb. 4:12, 13). Therefore, not only the tongue but also the thoughts of the heart are guarded from evil. "Hell and Destruction are before the LORD; So how much more the hearts of the sons of men" (Prov. 15:11)?
2. It reaches outward "to visit orphans and widows in their trouble." It is not a merciless, inactive religion; on the contrary, it seeks to aid others in need (Jas. 2:8, 15, 16; Matt. 25:36, 43; cf. Lk. 1:68, 78, 79; Acts 15:14; 1 Tim. 5:3, 4, 8).
3. It reaches inward "to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Tolerance of sin displays only an ineffective religion. It showcases a hypocrite rather than a genuine saint. We are called to remove sin from our lives by the very death of Jesus the Son of God. His death was for the remission of our sins; yet, sin is the violation of law! Hence we are implicitly commanded by His death to revere God's law and walk the line. We ought to consider Nathanael whom Jesus described, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" (Jn. 1:47). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8).

