

GOD CALLS FOR PURE RELIGION

"*Pure religion*" (James 1:27) involves careful attention to godly conduct and service in accord with Christ. Discipleship is not simply internalized, but rather, Christians strive to practice undefiled religion that is acceptable to God. What a person does or does not do in the body matters to God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). A man's deeds are a manifestation of what kind of faith he truly has.

A rich faith in the Lord Jesus grows to bear fruits of spiritual maturity. This saving faith endures trials while resisting temptations (James 1:2-4, 14-16). It is a faith that is a doer of the saving word of God (1:21-25); that treats others with love and mercy (2:8, 13); that bridles his tongue (3:2); that seeks the heavenly wisdom of righteousness (3:17-18); and that submits daily to God while resisting the devil (4:7).

The pure religion of God is very much alive and active every day. It is not disconnected ceremonies which are checked off routinely, but rather, a faith-filled life constantly drawing near to the Holy One with mind and body, with deeds and words. Christians are warned that a believer's religion can become worthless, **if** he lacks self-control (James 1:26). A believer can offer worship to the Almighty, and his worship not be acceptable to God (cf. Matthew 15:3-9).

Pure religion is both personal and interpersonal. When God's word of truth is genuinely received, faith produces appropriate actions reflecting the law of liberty (James 1:25). *Personal spiritual maintenance* is core to having the love of the Father dwelling in us (cf. 1 John 2:15) - an essential demonstration of true allegiance in Christ. Once cleansed by grace through faith, the day to day work of keeping ourselves unspotted from the world begins. My religion in Christ is not pure if I continually splatter myself with wickedness. I must keep my hands and my feet, my eyes and my ears, my heart and my body pure for God.

Impartial benevolent love is also central to a saving faith proving his purity of religion. Being a Christian is not just about focusing on personal needs, but also, being filled with Christ so that he is moved to show compassion to others - such as giving attention to widows and orphans (James 1:27) and showing hospitality to brethren in need (2:15-16; Romans 12:13). Therefore, walk worthy of Christ's calling.