



## What Is Religion?

James 1: 22-27

### **Living the Life You Talk About**

*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

*For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and*

*continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

The late great B.B. King once performed a Song entitled "I like to Live the love "

Listen to opening lyrics to this song

"My song is a serious matter

It reflects what I feel

If I say I love you, I mean it

'Cause in my song

Every line is for real

Every man or woman

Enjoys going home

To a peaceful situation

To give love and receive love

Without any complications

Whether my tune is short or long

Whether my lyrics are weak or strong

I like to live the love  
That I sing about in my song”

These lyrics are not just great lines for this song, but they are great lyrics for life; Because what you are doing is embodying what you say in your daily walk. How powerful is that? That same philosophy is how we should live our lives as followers of Christ.

In defense of his faith before King Agrippa Paul states in Acts 26:4&5 “My manner of life from my youth which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

I believe that if we were to ask Paul what his definition of religion was he would respond “it is **My Manner of life**, it is the way **I live**.” How do I come to this conclusion? Well, I have come to this conclusion by taking a closer look at key phrases in Paul’s statement to King Agrippa “**My Manner of life**” and “after the most straitest sect of our religion **I lived a Pharisee**.” **My manner of life**, the way I walked, the way I talked, The places I went ,and the things I did, his way of life. I lived a Pharisee. I dressed in the robes, I wore the phylacteries, I preached Phariseeism, I prayed Phariseeism, and if you cut me I bleed Phariseeism. I was the embodiment of what a Pharisee was. If you looked in the dictionary under Pharisee, My picture

would be on display. And when I became a follower of Christ, That became my manner of Life. Paul says of religion it was and is the way I live.

So then the simple answer to the question **What Is Religion** is, religion is something that you live. It is experiential not experimental. To say that religion is experiential means that you learn it as you live it. Whereas viewing religion as experimental means that you try it on to see if you like it. But if you don't you take it off or put it down. This is what Paul meant when he talked about the people of Israel who had a zeal of God but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, established their own righteousness. They made it up as they went along.

What is Religion? James records in his Epistle 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” While this summarizes James position on religion, to truly appreciate its powerful meaning we should consider this argument from a few preceding verses.

***But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*** What James is telling us is that Religion is the Word made flesh in us and through us. “In us and through us”? What am I saying? Simply this, Once the Word of God has indwelled within us, Once we have embraced it, Once it has found a resting place within us, then there should

be a manifestation of the word, that is, ministries that reveal our anointing. Another way of saying it is that there should be some Jesus talk and walk about us. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, seeing after the less fortunate”, Loving thy neighbor as thyself, Turning the other cheek. Praying for them that despitefully use you. Loving one another as Jesus loved us. To do any less is to deceive yourself.

James also warns us not to get Religion confused with religiosity. ***“For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass:***

***For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”*** It is a

pretty sad individual who looks at himself in the mirror and as soon as he turns away forgets what he looks like. So it is with the person who only talks a good game, but has no true commitment (has no works to back it up). That type of person is one who says he or she means well, but will lay their religion down if they have to. If it is a duck it had better walk like a duck, quack like a duck, have feathers like a duck, a flat round beak and webbed feet like a duck and last but not least water had better roll off its back like a duck! As Christians we must be meek, poor in spirit, and pure in heart. We should hunger and thirst after righteousness, and be the salt of the earth and the Light of the world.



To understand What Religion Is, James tell us that we must become fully immersed in the word, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ***But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.***

James also gives us a final warning reemphasizing the danger of religiosity. ***If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*** You can't just talk anyway and say anything. Ducks don't chirp like birds, don't howl like wolves, and they don't bark like dogs.

Neither do Christians curse like thugs or lie like the devil.

Finally, James bring us to the conclusion of the whole matter, What is Religion? Well, James tell us that” Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Our objective has been to define What religion Is. What we hear from James is not just a definition but a separation. James begins his definition by first separating it from a general perspective and narrows the scope of his definition by saying Pure Religion, not experimental religion, Pure Religion, not religiosity, Not a zeal of God, but

Pure Religion. Take care of the less fortunate and don't forget that while we are in the world, we are not of the world. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, peculiar people. We are set apart, we walk like Christ, we talk like Christ, we do the work that followers of Christ do. As Paul would say "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. And not I but Christ liveth in me and this life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. In other words if I am a true follower of Christ, If I live the life I talk about Then

what you see is not me, but He who  
speaks through me.