

WHAT IS PURE RELIGION?

Text: *James 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.*

INTRODUCTION

Concern for our fellowmen and the absence of worldliness are two main facets of the Christian religion. It has been said that social concern — without spiritual basis — is like a corpse without life; and spirituality — without concern for our fellowmen — is like a ghost without a body. To be the living Church, we need Spirit and Body.

TRUE CHRISTIANITY IS LOVE IN ACTION

1 John 3:16-18:

16 Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because He laid down His Life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?

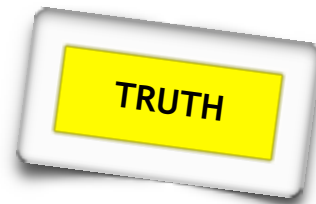
18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

What is the effect on ourselves? *The Words of Jesus:*

John 3:19: And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

We know we are of the truth.

We shall assure our hearts before God.



What is the effect on others?

They will know we are Jesus' disciples. ***The Words of Jesus:***

John 13:35: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

They will want what we have.

They will glorify God in us.

Matthew 5:16: *The Words of Jesus* “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven.**”

APPLICATION

We need to pray for people, then put feet under our prayers, e.g., become God’s instruments in caring for the needs we can meet. When you see someone with a burden, determine how much of it you can lift and how far you can carry it. Then – DO IT. Don’t just think about doing it, or saying that you’ll do it “some time”.



Visit those who have urgent needs, such as illness, death, financial loss, family trouble.



Counsel ... from the Word of God

Comfort ... from an understanding heart.

Give material help ... as you are able.

Care ... visit those who have long-standing needs, such as shut-ins, prisoners, the lonely.

Counsel, comfort and care. Help in a wise material way. For example, never give money to a drunk or he will use it to buy more booze. Give him food, clothing, or shelter.

Jesus encouraged visitation. – “*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*”

Matthew 25:36-40: *The Words of Jesus*

³⁶ “Naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.

³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?’

³⁸ When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee?’

³⁹ Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?’”

⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, “Verily I say unto you,

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Those helped will listen. Kindness is often the first step in reaching the lost. We need an attitude like Elisha’s toward the poor widow. His first question was, “*What can I do for you?*”

1 Kings 4:2: And Elisha said unto her, “What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house?” And she said, “Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.”

Note: Consistent kindness is a miracle that will astound the world, and maybe even us, too. Be kind, quietly. Do all the good you can, and make as little fuss and noise about it as possible.

Matthew 6:1-2: The Words of Jesus

1 “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father Who is in Heaven.

2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”

ABSENCE OF WORLDLINESS (Personal ethics – inward separation)

Christians are to be in the world, helping others, but they are not to be of the world.

- Many worldly people are kind and generous. (There are lots of friendly and cheerful pagans.)
- Christians must be friendly and cheerful, but add the spiritual facet.
- Purity – in conversation, thought and action
- Holiness – God-centered, dedicated to His Kingdom
- Praise – telling the Good News; and telling the best about everyone you know - - no condemnation!
- Christians must avoid degrading influences: drinking, gambling, pornographic literature, etc.



1 Peter 2:21: For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps:

- We are to be a “separate people” – a holy nation – a priesthood of believers.
- Impurity stunts our spiritual growth.
- Impurity in our lives keeps us from leading others to a new level of Christian living. People will say that what we are speaks so loudly that they can’t hear what we say

PEOPLE POLLUTE AND DEFILE THE LAND BY SINNING

Deuteronomy 21:23: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Isaiah 24:5: The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the Everlasting Covenant.

Jeremiah 2:6: Neither said they, “Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?”

Jeremiah 16:18: And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled My land, they have filled Mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.

Numbers 35:33: So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

Psalms 106:38: And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.



LAND PERSONIFIED

Jeremiah 23:10: *For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right.*

Leviticus 18:25: *And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.*

Numbers 5::3: *Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.*

Numbers 35:33-34:

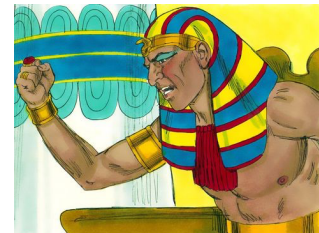
³³ *So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*

³⁴ *Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the Children of Israel.*

Isaiah 30:22: *Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.*

Jeremiah 32:34: *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by My Name, to defile it.*

Ezekiel 29:3: *Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.*



Ezekiel 36:17: *Son of man, when the House of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before Me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.*

DEFILE THE CHURCH

Leviticus 15:31: *Thus shall ye separate the Children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile My Tabernacle that is among them.*

Leviticus 20:3: *And I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile My Sanctuary, and to profane My Holy Name.*

Numbers 19:20: *But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the Sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.*

2 Chronicles 36:14: *Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the House of the LORD which He had hallowed in Jerusalem.*

Ezekiel 5:11: *Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled My Sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall Mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.*

Revelation 21:27: *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

Jeremiah 7:30: *For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My Name, to pollute it.*

Daniel 11:31: *And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the Sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.*

DEFILE THEMSELVES

Matthew 15:18-20: *The Words of Jesus*

¹⁸ *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

¹⁹ *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*

²⁰ *These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”*

Ezekiel 14:11: *That the House of Israel may go no more astray from Me,*

neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be My People, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 20:31: For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O House of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.

Leviticus 19:31: Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I AM the LORD your God.

Ezekiel 22:11: And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

1 Corinthians 3:17: If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 8:7: Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

Acts 15:20: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Numbers 5:2: Command the Children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead:

Jude 8: Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

James 3:6: And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.



Ezekiel 18:6: And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the House of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

Ezekiel 23:17: And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them,

and her mind was alienated from them.

Hosea 5:3: I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from Me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.

Hosea 6:10: I have seen an horrible thing in the House of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

Leviticus 4:14: When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the Tabernacle of the congregation.

2 Peter 2:20: For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Genesis 34:2, 5:

² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

⁵ And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

Genesis 34:13: And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister:

Genesis 34:27: The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.

NOTES AND APPLICATIONS

Not that we will be “Holier than thou”, but that sin will not have dominion over us. We are not to be as monks who shut themselves up from all contact with the world, neither as those who become tainted with sinful living. We can minister to those in need, but have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Ephesians 5:11: And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

We are to battle sin and injustice actively as we battle error of doctrine!

ILLUSTRATION

One has said, *“It is good to be saved and to know it.”* Another has said, *“It is better to be saved and show it.”*

Thomas Kelly has these challenging words for us: *“Live and walk with God. Experience the power and the triumph. The time has come when men must recognize the totalitarian claim of the Gospel. They must live lives of dedication. Our nature must be one that radiates gentleness, power and joy – from the Living Christ.”*

CONCLUSION

Practical religion and spiritual growth BOTH come from a life that is committed to Him. Offer Him all you have — all that you are — and let Him make of your life what He wants it to be.

Let us be Spirit-filled Christians, becoming more like Jesus — in word and in action — in this world He loves and died to save!

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

James says something about the religion of his day as being one without power but filled with forms and rituals.

James 2:20: But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Hearers and not doers make religion vain.

James 2:22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

THE DESCRIPTION OF TRUE RELIGION

True religion is more practical than it is doctrinal. Our attitudes toward God and affections are not the issue here. Pure religion has an influence on the world at large, for we are the salt of the earth. We are in the world, but not of it. We are to be kept from its corrupting influence. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world, Paul says. We are to be crucified to the world and the world to us.

Galatians 6:14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto Me, and I unto the world.

Pure Religion will influence us to do something for the poor and afflicted. Non-service religion will never turn them toward God.

Matthew 25:45: [The Words of Jesus](#) Then shall He [Jesus] answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

John 13:34: [The Words of Jesus](#) "A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Romans 12:15: Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Pure Religion will show what state of Grace we are really in, and will regulate our conduct in the world.

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