

Nothing is more repulsive than hypocrisy.

The Greek word has to do with one's playing a part on the Greek stage.

Defined: feigning to be what one is not.

Many of us have family members who have denied the Lord because of true hypocrisy among Christians.

Hypocrisy is most often found in religious circles, because a high standard is set in religion & few are willing to pay the price to achieve that standard—whether the true religion defined in the word of God or one fabricated by men.

Jesus challenged the religionists of His day (**Luke 6:46**); these were guilty of hypocrisy.

Perhaps we can see a little hypocrisy in our own lives. **The** ability to see ourselves as God sees us is the first step to conforming our lives to the image & glory of His Son our Great Example (**1 Pet 2:21**).

The Hypocrite refuses to see himself in the light of God's truth. **So** he lives a dual life with a dual character practicing a religion that will have little affect on others, & which will not work to his salvation.

James makes it clear that true religion makes a great difference in one's life: thinking, attitude, language, habits, choice of friends & service to others.

Pure & undefiled religion is not a matter of making inflated claims to spiritual service & church attendance. **It** is a matter of allowing the word of God to take its total control over our minds, wills & actions.

The Holy Spirit specifies 5 areas in which true religion elevates our lives to a level where we may properly respect & serve God:

- 1) True religion elevates our ...view of God
- 2) ...ability to control tempter & tongue
- 3) ...heart to receive God's instructions
- 4) ...mind to obey God
- 5) ...concern for the needy

1. About what were they not to be deceived? (16-17)

“**Every** good & perfect gift...comes down from the Father of lights”

With Him there is “no variation or shadow of turning”

Therefore, He cannot give any gift that is not both good & perfect.

Verses 12-15 warned against a false view of God, where one might accuse Him of being evil & responsible for our hardships & temptations.

James’ words here (16-17) are another reminder to Christians that God is not behind those things that have resulted in evil in their lives.

a. How could they be deceived about that fact?

Satan is the great deceiver. **If** he can get us to turn our attention from our spiritual blessings & cause us to mope about our hardships (real or imagined), then he may be able to create discontent & frustration in us that will lead us into many sins.

God the Father is the only source of good (righteous, wholesome) things in life. **He** does not bless us one day & tempt us the next.

Temptation to do evil comes from Satan & our own selfish desires.

Trials & stresses of everyday living are not allowed for our destruction but for our strengthening.

God’s nature in giving is emphasized by the phrase “Father of lights” (Father of all light). **The** light of the sun is not constant on our planet. **It** varies as the earth turns on its axis. **But** God’s good & perfect gifts are not occasional & varying in intensity. **He** is constant & steady with His blessings (1 Jn 1:5).

The greatest gift of all is salvation. **That** gift is received by means of the “word of truth”. **When** we obey the gospel, we become of “a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” – *the first & best part of a harvested crop dedicated to God.*

2. What conduct will follow one “brought forth by the word of truth”? (18-20)

“**Swift** to hear – **Slow** to speak – **Slow** to wrath”

We should not jump to hasty & potentially faulty conclusions about God on the basis of our trials & temptations.

An angry person is not under God’s control, especially a man who is angry with God.

Verse 21 continues the answer to the question above:

He will “lay aside all filthiness” – corrupting, defiling & polluting sins.

He will “lay aside all...overflow of wickedness” – excess or surplus of unholy conduct.

He will “receive with meekness the implanted word” for the saving of the soul.

3. What is the implanted word, & why is it so called? (21)

Parable of the soil (**Matt 13**) shows the Sower sowing the seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God, into the heart or minds of men.

James was addressing Christians who had begun to harden their hearts to the spiritual seed of the Word of God.

a. How are we to receive the implanted word? (21)

“**Meekness**” – Gentleness.

Perhaps the opposite of the attitude they presently had which was preventing them from receiving the Word of Truth.

4. What is another way in which one can be deceived? (22-25)

Believing that by giving mental assent to the truth, we have then fulfilled our duty.

Since it is easy to forget how we look, we return to the mirror very often.

The same would apply to the appearance of our spiritual man & our need to return to the mirror of truth on a regular basis.

5. What is the “perfect law of liberty”? (25)

The gospel of Jesus Christ – **New Testament** revelation.

a. Why is it law? Why is it perfect? What has it to do with liberty? (25)

It contains laws taught directly or by example (1 Tim 1:9-11; Gal 2:14).

It is complete, there has not been or will there be any amendments.

It provides freedom (Jn 8:31-32; Rom 6:17-18), not freedom from laws, not freedom to follow one’s own course in life—this very epistle is an indictment against such a conclusion since it is full of laws.

Freedom from sin yes, but also a **freedom** from the idea of salvation through perfect law keeping.

6. What are the tests of a pure & true religion (in our text)? (26-27)

Control of the tongue – **Benevolent** nature – **Abstaining** from the spiritual defilements of the world

7. How can a person's religion be considered "useless"? (26)

When he does not control his tongue – **When** he shuts his heart to the plight of the poor – **When** he conforms his life to the ways of the world

What if I told you that I spent all my discretionary income on season tickets to the Cowboy's games next year, & that I would not be present on Sundays, but that I hoped to place myself in the stands where I could drink beer, holler at the referees & cheer for Americas team?

What would you say about my religion?

And yet we can do that commit the same sins (with the exception of beer drinking) within the normal activities of life in a local congregation.

8. What is the meaning of "visit" in verse 27?

See (Matt 25:36, 43).

To visit with the intention of helping one meet a need.

10. Verse 27 suggests *individual* responsibility in benevolence. List other passages:

Congregational benevolence was always directed toward saints (1 Tim 5:9-10; compare 5:16; see also Acts 4:32-35; 1 Cor 16:1; Rom 15:25-26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12).

James speaks of individual opportunities in benevolence (Gal 6:10; Luke 10).

9. Characterize a religion that seeks the pleasure & acceptance of the world.

The only reward is the pleasure & the acceptance by the world (Matt 6:1-4).

Furthermore, our religious practice must be more than a mere formality as it was for the Jewish sects & Israel before & after captivity (Mic 6:6-8; Malachi).