

Introduction

READ: James 1:22-27

Story about me growing up in the church. Sitting on the premises but not standing on the promises.

- Sneaking out, vandalism, picking up girls, always waiting for it to be over so I could get out to life
- Outside of church having a totally different lifestyle – one that reflected worldly values.

I was a hearer of the Word of God, but not a doer. I was self-deceived.

Question for you tonight, How do you know if you are the real deal, a true Christian or merely deceived?

What is the test of vain religion

James tells us that hearers are a self-deceived, but the reality of their vain religion is easily evident. The real test is not a person's religious practices or participation.

- The litmus test is the person's life outside of their religious practices and rituals
- Many times we recount our religious activities, our morality, or devoutness
 - Look at the activities morality, devoutness, and discipline of Buddhist monks

Reality is that observance to outward rituals is no substitute for inward righteousness,

When I was growing up in the church, I looked at the wrong things and determined myself a Christian. Again, James gives us one example of someone who is devout in worship yet has uncontrolled tongue

- Reveals that the evil seat of their heart has not been removed by Christ.

What is the test of True Religion

Attendance in Christians services is a substitute for the practice of Christian service

- Christianity is both WORD and DEED. If its not done outside the church, you are not doing Christianity at all!
- Vain worship begins and ends here at church.
- Worship must be related to your life.... An overflow of your 24/7/365.

DO YOU LIVE LIKE GOD? Mercy and Righteousness

- Visiting the poor in their affliction – Going to them where they are – not the reverse!
- If this is not an ordinary feature of your life...
 - then you need to confess & repent or confess & convert
 - Otherwise, our worship is in vain. If you disagree, then your looking to the wrong things to validate your religious rituals
- Visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction is who God is.
- Visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction is the gospel that saved you from your sin.
- Visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction is the life you are called to live to the world.

What keeps us from visiting the poor is that we are stained by the world.

Meaning that we have adopted the value system of the world which serves itself at the cost of others – Greed, excessiveness, materialism and self-advancement.

CONCLUSION

Just like the believers James was writing to, we too as suburban American Christian place too much emphasis on hearing and not doing, other than character morals.

Ask yourself this:

How much of your religious life is spent hearing, being taught?

How much of your life is spent going to the poor in their affliction.

James 2:1-7

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. [2] For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, [3] and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," [4] have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? [5] Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? [6] But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? [7] Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

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ILLUSTRATION:

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Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

James 2:8-13

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. [9] But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. [10] For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. [11] For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. [12] So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. [13] For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

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