



“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:20

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“Pure Religion”

Chuck Northrop

In the first chapter of the book of James, the writer by inspiration of the Holy Spirit admonished Christians to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). To help his readers understand this concept, James gave an illustration of a person looking into a mirror and without making any change, goes away forgetting the kind of person he is. To help his readers make the application, James disclosed the mirror is the “perfect law of liberty.” When people study the “perfect law of liberty” which is the word of God, the Bible, and do not make the application by becoming “doers of the word,” they deceive themselves. However, when people take the proper action by becoming doers, James declared they will be blessed in their deeds.

This illustrious portion of scripture contrasts vain and pure religion. Vain religion makes no application to self and, thereby, no changes are made in a person’s life. In contrast, pure religion makes proper application, changes a person’s life, and is evidenced by his action. To represent both vain and pure religion, the writer gave examples of each. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. They are intended to illustrate vain and pure religion. They are also intended to help readers make the necessary application of the fundamental principle of “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

“But
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doers
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word,
and
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only,
deceiving
your
own
selves.”
James 1:22

The first example concerns vain religion. James wrote, “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” (James 1:26). Later in the book, James went into more detail on the topic of the tongue. However, its use in chapter 1 is enough to provide an example of vain religion. Everyone should know Christians should not say just anything. There are words such as profanity and lies that should never go through the lips of a disciple of Christ. Also in this connection, gossip should never be propagated by Christians. Obviously, there are times when some words would be appropriate to utter while the same words on another occasion would be utterly inappropriate. Gossip is sometimes not easily defined, but it would suffice to say gossip is used in such a way as to cause hurt in another person. They may even be true words but inappropriate for the occasion. A person’s religion is vain if he does not apply the biblical principles as in the example of the tongue.

The second example James used involves pure religion. He instructed, “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” (James 1:27). In this verse, two principles are used as examples of pure religion.

The first principle is “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” “To visit” does not mean to go to their house and chat with them as in a social call although it could include this. Guy N. Woods in the Gospel Advocate commentary on James makes the following observation:

“It is used figuratively here to designate the assistance which pure and undefiled religion requires of the Lord’s people regarding ‘the fatherless and widows.’ It is quite obviously not limited to a social call; an orphaned or abandoned child would find little solace in such! God ‘visited’ his people by sending his Son into the world to bless and to save them (Luke 1:68); the ‘fatherless and widows’ are ‘visited’ when we do what we can to comfort and sustain them.”

The point is exceedingly clear. If a person is going to have something besides an empty religious belief, he or she must give attention to others. Remember the passage is not intended to be exhaustive but to give examples of how to have pure and undefiled religion. Paul gave a more complete view of benevolence in Galatians 6:10 which says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

The second principle is “to keep himself unspotted from the world.” In the true Lord’s prayer, John 17, Jesus taught Christians are in the world but not of the world. Concerning unbelievers Paul exhorted, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith

the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). To believe and be immersed into Christ is just the beginning. For this reason it is called the “new birth.” In addition to being born again, Christians must live as Christ lived, love as Christ loved, and give as Christ gave. Though it is not always the case, all Christians ought to imitate Him. To hear the word proclaimed, to obey “from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:17), and then not to live a holy and distinct life from the world, makes a person’s religion vain.

Therefore, as we endeavor in life to live a “pure and undefiled religion,” let us always remember the principle James taught, “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” It is this principle which “pure and undefiled religion” has its basis. Without this fundamental principle, any and all religion is vain, empty, and without meaning. □

Count Your Many Blessings

It is often said it would be difficult to write down all of the ways we have been blessed. Following are a few examples of various ways we are encouraged to be thankful:

- Giving thanks for _____ (1 Timothy 2:1).
- Giving thanks to _____ (Hebrews 13:15).
- Giving thanks to _____ and the _____ by _____ (Colossians 3:17).
- Giving thanks for the _____ through our _____ (1 Corinthians 15:57).
- Giving thanks for our _____ (1 Timothy 4:3-4).
- Giving thanks while continuing _____ (Colossians 4:2).
- Giving thanks for our establishment in the _____ (Colossians 2:7).
- Giving thanks for all _____ from God (2 Corinthians 9:11).
- Giving thanks to having been called in _____ (Colossians 3:15).
- Giving thanks to _____ our _____ (1 Timothy 1:12).

*“In every thing give thanks:
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*
1 Thessalonians 5:18

Observations and Concerns

March 15, 2023

Welcome Visitors! We are so thankful you decided to visit with us today.

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth” (Psalm 96:9).

Expression of Gratitude: Let us remember to give thanks to God for those who invite friends and family to services.

The annual Oologah lectureship this year is March 24-26 on the theme of **“Hold Fast...”** Flyers are available in the foyer.

Azalea Gospel Meeting is April 2–5, 2023 with Toney Smith on “The Christian Life.”

Weleetka Gospel Meeting is April 16–19, 2023 with Jamie Beller on “In God We Trust.”

Remember in Prayer:

- **Dicie Jackson** will need to have surgery to remove a spot in her thymus gland. She is presently waiting for it to be scheduled.
- **Lisa Earl** is scheduled to have double hernia repair surgery on Thursday, March 16th.
- **Dan Dennis** is waiting for the results of his resent CT scan on his lungs.
- **Nelda Hudson** learned her heart is not pumping properly causing episodes of defibrillation.
- **Ed Dindy**, father of Tia Swearingen, has cancer and is waiting to begin radiation treatments.
- **Ed Clark**, who many of us know, is recuperating from a recent fall.

Schedule of Services	Assignments		
		Wednesday, Mar. 15	Sunday, Mar. 19 AM
			Sunday, Mar. 19 PM
	Announcements	Chuck Northrop	Chris Nelson
	Song Leader	Ross Swearingen	Doyle Jackson
	Prayer	Chris Nelson	Paul Praschnik
	Lord's Supper (speaker)		Ross Swearingen
	Lord's Supper		Chris Nelson
	Lesson	Doyle Jackson	Russ Earl
	Prayer / Door Attendant	Paul Praschnik	Chuck Northrop
Sundays			
Bible Classes.	9:30 AM		
Worship	10:30 AM		
Worship	5:00 PM		
Wednesdays			
Bible Classes.	7:00 PM		
Website: oologahcofc.org			