

iii. An unmerciful judge with wicked thoughts!

a) Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:18

b) Proverbs 14:31; 22:2; 28:27

c) *Speak and Act According to the Law of the Gospel!*
(2:12-13)

d) Matt 18:32-33 To not have mercy is wickedness!

LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.
The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an
aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- Did James simply mention *pure religion* for one verse and moved on to another topic? How does Leviticus 19:15 help us see a strong relationship between James 1:27 and 2:1-4?
- Who are the poor in our lives? Why must we not spiritualize this such that the poor are those who don't know the Gospel?
- What are some of the ways our culture may teach us standards by which we measure people and what they can do for us?
- Why do you think 2:4 says that in discriminating against the poor, some in James' audience had become judges with wicked thoughts?
- Is it possible to hold somebody to a standard of righteousness and in the process actually be wicked? (Consider Matthew 18:23-35.)
- Pure religion is not less than caring for orphans and widows but it goes to the heart. It forces us to deal with ourselves at the level of heart issues that would otherwise be unnoticed. Explain how.
- How are you living in such a way that your heart attitudes toward others are forced to the surface?
- What are the ways in which you are most likely to judge others according to how they may or may not provide any benefit to you?

Faith that Turns Your World Right Side Up (Part 6)

Pure and Spotless Religion

Jerry Cisar — June 12, 2016

Text: James 1:27 – 2:4

Introduction

I. Pure and undefiled Religion (1:27)

A. What is “religion”?

- i. *Beliefs regarding to supernatural persons and powers and the devout practice of those beliefs.*
- ii. *“worship of God”*
- iii. *authentic faith*

B. To visit orphans and widows in their distress.

- i. Orphans and widows were frequently paired together in the OT as the objects of mercy.
 - a) *“Orphans and widows”* was representative of the poor, the neediest or weakest members of society.
 - b) Exodus 22:21-27
 - c) Deuteronomy 14:22-29; 26:12-13
 - d) Malachi 3:5

e) Isaiah 1:15-18

f) Matthew 25:35-36

C. To keep oneself unstained from the world.

i. *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: looking after orphans and widows in their distress, keeping oneself unstained by the world.*

ii. Is true religion only a matter of outward deeds?

a) James knows that this very issue is the test of what is in our hearts!

b) When we sacrificially give to those in need, there is a dying to self that occurs.

a) When we value people according to what they have to offer us, we will be **unjust** in how we deal with them.

➤ Luke 14:12-14

b) Mercy is not less than a deed that gives them food, but it is more than that. It is a heart that views them in compassion as God has viewed us in compassion.

iv. *“Our Lord Jesus Christ of glory”*

a) Philippians 2:5-8

b) To value people according to what we can gain from our connection to them, or their inability to benefit us, is contrary to the very gospel of Jesus!

II. Failure to Have Pure and undefiled Religion (2:1-4)

A. James points out that they are showing partiality... they discriminate against the poor, and show favor to the rich.

i. Showing partiality is on the same level as not caring for orphans and widows.

a) Deuteronomy 10:17-19

b) Luke 18:21-22

ii. 2:1-4 exposes that some in James' audience do not have the right heart behind whatever else they may have done.

iii. Leviticus 19:15

B. James is not speaking hypothetically!

i. 2:6 *But you have dishonored the poor.*

ii. If you treat them differently, if you offer preferential treatment to the rich person, or less than the same hospitality to the poor, you have discriminated.