

“If Any Man Thinketh Himself To Be Religious”

No. 44

Introduction.

- I. In James 1:26 we read a statement that will be the theme of our lesson. James said, “If any man thinketh himself to be religious.”
- II. Most Christians, including most or all of us, regard ourselves as being religious. This is not negative, but the scriptures indicate that it is quite possible for a person to deceive himself into believing that he is religious (pleasing to God), but in reality be far from it.
- III. For the next few minutes let’s each examine ourselves in light of God’s word to see if we are religious.
 - I. **Let Him Remember Whose Son He Is** - If any man thinketh himself to be religious, let him remember whose son he is.
 - A. **Once a young man was leaving for college.** His father had prayed at the breakfast table asking God to protect him and grant him success in the career he was undertaking. Rising from the table the young man expected to receive some final advice and instructions. Instead, the father arose from the table, put his hand on the young man’s shoulder, and said, “My boy, remember whose son you are...” Nothing more needed to be said. The young man set out to live a fine life because he did not want to bring shame to his earthly father or his family.
 - B. The person who regards himself as religious must always keep in mind that he is a child of the living God of heaven.
 1. As children of God, who have been begotten again into God’s family, we should do nothing that would bring shame and reproach upon God and the members of his family.
 2. We should let our lives shine and draw men to Christ. (Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15; Eph. 5:8).
 - II. **Let That Man Have Something To Show For His Faith** - If any man thinketh himself to be religious, let that man have something to show for his faith.
 - A. **Faith must act.** A faith that does not act is vain and utterly useless in the sight of God. (Matt. 7:21; Gal. 5:6; Jas. 1:22; 2:14-17, 20, 24, 26; 4:17).
 - B. Christians today must have something to show for their faith.
 1. The Lord has not called us to uselessness, but He has called us to usefulness.
 2. Luke 13:6-9
 - III. **Let That Man Bridle His Tongue** - If any man thinketh himself to be religious, let that man bridle his tongue.
 - A. The scriptures have much to say about bridling the tongue. (Psa. 39:1; Prov. 13:3; Matt. 12:36, 37; Jas. 1:19, 26; 4:11; Jas. 3:2-12).

1. As you can see, the inspired writers have much to say about the child of God and the use of his tongue. Undoubtedly, they could see many people who regarded themselves as being religious who did not guard their tongues from evil and destroyed the reputation of others with their slanderous, malicious tongues.
2. There are still many people who claim to be religious who are careless with their tongues and say many mean, ugly, cruel things. James affirmed that such a person's religion is vain. A million good works will not make up for an unbridled tongue!

B. **Once a prominent government official**, who had been strongly opposed to the policies of a senator, was informed of the senator's death. When asked to comment, he said, "Of the dead, nothing unless good."

1. This is an excellent philosophy, but I submit to you that what is good for the dead is better for the living: "Of the living, nothing unless good!"
2. Wouldn't it be wonderful if God's children would declare an end of speaking evil of others and one another. How few of us truly obey the command, "Speak evil of no man."
3. Recently I read a poem that I would like to share with you.

Only a word of anger,
But it wounded one sensitive heart;
Only a word of sharp reproach,
But it made the teardrops start;
Only a hasty, thoughtless word,
Sarcastic and unkind
But it darkened the day before so bright,
And left a sting behind.

Only a word of kindness,
But it lightened one heart of its grief;
Only a word of sympathy,
But it brought one soul relief;
Only a word of gentle cheer,
But it flooded with radiant light
The pathway that seemed so dark before,
And made the day more bright.

4. Let us always pray as David did. (Psa. 19:14).
5. Let us remember that "a dog has many friends because the wag is in the tail and not in the tongue."

IV. **Let Him Keep Himself Unspotted From The World** - If any man thinketh himself to be religious, let him keep himself unspotted from the world. (Rom. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15; Jas. 1:27; 4:4).

- A. As Christians we must not partake of the evil things of this world. We must live transformed lives.
- B. It is sad that so many Christians try to live a Christian life and still be a friend of the world.

1. This is a great problem in the church today.
 - a. There are many people who want to be a Christians, but do not not want to pay the price of Christianity. They want to drink, dance, wear scanty clothing, and attend indecent movies just like the world.
 - b. There are some religious groups today realizing this desire who have compromised the truth of God. They allow their members to do these things and sometimes even give parties where such goes on. Members of the body of Christ must not be deluded by such practices.
2. Friendship with the world makes us an enemy of God. To be an enemy of God means eternal punishment. (2 Thess. 1:8, 9).

V. **Let Him Not Forget The Power Of Prayer** - If any man thinketh himself to be religious, let him not forget the power of prayer.

A. The Bible has much to say about the power of prayer. (Matt. 21:22; Jas. 4:2; 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:12; 1 Jn. 5:14, 15).

B. Today Christians need to believe more in the power of prayer.

1. Prayer is the greatest untapped power in the world. If we will pray in faith, God will do great things for us. He will provide all the things we need in life.
2. Realizing the power of prayer, we should pray often to God. When our prayers ascend, His power descends. Someone has written:

“There is strength for every burden;
 There is courage for the day,
 There is hope for each tomorrow--
 There is help along the way!

There is peace of mind transcending
 All the upset round about;
 There is grace for every trial,
 There is faith for every doubt!

There is comfort in just trusting,
 Each new moment to His care,
 And a real and blest assurance,
 In the quietness of prayer!”

Conclusion

- I. Brethren, in summary, if we are religious, we will let our religion be a dynamic force in our lives. It will change us into Christlike personalities who live the gospel within and without every day of our lives.
- II. This invitation is now extended. If you are not a Christian and would like to submit your life to God or are a Christian who needs to be restored, we invite you to come to Christ. Come as we stand and sing.