

## FAITH THAT MOVES US TO GIVE GOD'S goodness

*What is the first thought or word that comes to your mind when you hear the word: religion. ??? What about those you work with, those on your team, or those who are neighbors? In our western world – 82% of Britain's think religion does more harm than good. In our country - 50% of Americans do, yet 60% say they are religious. It seems more people than ever in our culture have a negative response to religion. Words like narrow minded, intolerant, uncaring, are words I hear. Yet it also seems there are just as many people who long for spiritual things. We live in a confused culture. Today, God is echoing a command he has given his people for centuries and he is going to help us see how keeping this command can affect the world's view of what pure and undefiled religion truly is to quote God's words hear in James.*

**We are going to begin in vs 22 today** – with a short look at how God calls us to keep his commands. Before we do that – let me say something about **how we approach the Word of God here at the Summit**. We usually preach through whole books at a time trying to cover as much of the book as we can because we believe context (the surrounding ideas) helps us best understand God's words. Engaging whole books helps us all learn how to read God's word together. We also do topical studies – but mostly we engage whole books. Even as we do – we don't always preach every word of every verse in every book bc of time and the focus we are taking in the book. We are not leaving out passages that are hard. We love to tackle those. We are not interpreting it our way. We are simply praying through focus and time. James has many stand alone verses. We will not cover every word of every verse in here on Sunday morning. We have Community Groups and DNA Groups to do this. To that end, this morning we really are going to focus in on verse 27 – but we begin in vs 22 to help us see how we keep the commands of God.

### James 1:22-25

22 But be doers of the word, We are called to be doers of God's word (obedient).

*We are obeying God's voice and will when we obey his law not just morals. Law shows us his heart, his character.*

22 ...and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves ...23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. Hearers only are living in a lie.

*All Christ-followers struggle to obey. But if you **only hear and consistently** do not obey you are living in a lie. That could mean you are not a Christ-follower, God has not breathed life into your soul through the work of Christ alone. Or, you are a follower whose heart is growing hard to God's voice.*

25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

We are called to obey from freedom - *not for it*. - **Let's put this call into practice in verse 27**

James 1:26-27 (ESV) 26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. *Main truth or Big Idea -*

**True Christ-followers - care for the vulnerable and unloved.**

religion – *lit. devotion to a god - used here in the positive - it refers to devotion to Jesus Christ*

pure and undefiled – to be right before God by another's work in our place. *Referred to the ceremonial cleansing that came from sacrifices and offerings. The sacrifice **alone** made one clean before God. All sacrifices pointed to the coming work of Christ – the ultimate pure and undefiled sacrifice.* The point - if our religion – if our right standing before God has been purchased by Christ's sacrifice alone - **the result in our lives:**

is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

He is not saying this is **ALL** true worship of Jesus is – He is saying 2 things:

- 1) When Jesus has made you right before God, caring for the vulnerable & unloved will be a part of your life.
- 2) When we don't care for the vulnerable & unloved – our worship of Jesus is worth little to others or us.

01. What does this mean for us today? *Who were orphans and widows in this culture?*

**Orphans** – No orphanages – just orphans who were slaves or street urchins – who stole, deceived, took, vandalized, victimized others. **Widows** were economically destitute. Almost all women depended on their husband's jobs or became slaves or prostitutes. Widows were seen as judged by God & they were forgotten pieces of property, not people.] Both were vulnerable & seen as unlovely by God & bc of this they were unloved.

Orphans and widows in this culture were vulnerable and unloved.

Who are our vulnerable and unloved? Orphans, widows – homeless, refugees, and aliens.

## 02. How is God calling us to respond?

- God is calling us to a lifestyle. - not a drive by fruiting, visit here is an ongoing action.
- God is calling us to a corporate lifestyle. - together for the gospel
- God is calling us to care for the vulnerable and unloved. **Summary:**

Care for the vulnerable and unloved is an ongoing action that moves through God's body – the church. **JZ**  
**buying food for homeless working guy & asking his name. Why do you care?**

For centuries, God had declared his heart for the vulnerable and unloved – they were to be loved and cared for by his people. **Not an opportunity - an obligation** Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:10; Dt. 14:29; 24:17–22; Jer. 5:28, 22:3; Is. 1:10–17; Ezk. 22:7; Zc. 7:10; Jb. 29:16 **Why is this so important to God?**

We'll come back to this bc This is vital? 1<sup>st</sup> let's answer this question ...

## 03. Why is this often so unimportant to us?

God says, if we have been made pure before God by Christ our faith will include caring for the vulnerable and unloved. If our life in Christ does not include this – we are rebelling against God's word, against God heart – even the word implies – *distorting true worship of Jesus*. Why?

What is our sin issue with caring for the vulnerable and unloved?

We feel unsafe, we feel like they don't deserve it, we feel guilt, we feel fear we can't do enough.

**It makes us uncomfortable** – Why? We do everything we can to live in comfort – not discomfort.

Really uncomfortable situations – make us feel – fear (safety, failure), pride (don't deserve), guilt (I have ...)

So, we rebel against God's heart and will - by avoiding the vulnerable & unloved. We turn our eyes, our minds, our hearts away.

**Or, just as rebellious** – we go and engage these but not from God's righteous heart of compassion and care, we go with self-righteousness. We go with the attitude of the deserving & superior helping the undeserving, inferior. We go hoping our fear, guilt, and pride will be squashed by doing something good.

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. **I believe this is the reason for this ending.**

What is the greatest stain the world can put on those who have been made right before God by Christ?

The greatest stain is to move us to believe in "self-righteousness".

**God is not calling us to find our right standing and acceptance before him in our right acts.**

We can't remove the guilt, fear, prideful judgment – by our good actions.

– **Adopting an orphan does not remove guilt.** This is obeying for Freedom. Only Jesus' righteousness removes our guilt because he took on our guilt in his death.

– **Engaging the homeless does not remove fear.** This is obeying for Freedom. Only Jesus' righteousness removes our fear because he took on our fear that leads us to run from his commands.

– **Taking in a refugee will not remove our prideful judgment.** This is obeying for Freedom. Only Jesus' righteousness removes our prideful judgment because he took on our great pride. We are humbled at the cross & we see all people as rebels in need of the same unconditional love we have been shown.

**Unstained from the world** – is a pleading call to stay away from self-righteousness. This is crazy ugly to the world and even more ugly to God and eventually will keep us from the vulnerable & unloved because our caring won't remove our guilt, and eventually when our self-righteousness fails to make us feel better, we will stop doing good because it doesn't make us feel better.

• ***If you are not a Christ-Follower you have probably been turned off by the Church's (I mean the whole of the church across America) seemingly lack of care for the vulnerable & unloved. Or, you have smelled our better than thou attitude as we have attempted to care – I am sorry. Forgive us. I am sorry – that this has been the picture of God's heart and character you have seen and I am sorry for our part as well.***

• ***If you are a Christ-follower and you have approached the vulnerable & unloved from an attitude of superiority or you have never been involved in caring for them, that is you have never been involved in caring for the orphan, the widow, the homeless or the refugee: God's Word says you are in disobedience, in rebellion to Him.***

***I believe there are 3 reasons YOU and I have disobeyed God in this area:***

1. **COMFORT** – *we value our comfort above obeying God's will.*

2. **PRIDE** - *Some of us have been deceived. We have put ourselves above these & don't believe they deserve help. We don't see ourselves as one who was vulnerable and unlovely without Christ who did not deserve help either. Even as a Christ follower - if God held you to the same standard you and I often hold the homeless to – we would never sniff God's mercy and blessings now.*

3. **Some of us have been deceived and made this a political issue and not a biblical issue.**

*This is not a political issue. This is first and foremost a biblical or will of God's heart issue. Politics decides who comes here. God's word and heart tells us to love and care for them if they are here.*

*What if God sending refugees is an answer to prayer as we have tried to get into closed countries.*

04. **If this is our heart – how do you and I respond to our rebellion?**

***I confess this is my heart. In pride, I often think I'm better – I think some don't deserve my love & care.***

***In fear, I often think I can't solve this problem – so I shut my ears, my eyes, my heart.***

***In guilt, I often jump in – hoping my guilt will go away. I confess – I have lived in rebellion to God's call in this area more often than I have lived in obedience. Because of that I have led us to not value this as a body. That changes today. As elders we agree – we discussed this at length at our most recent elder's retreat. Will you walk with me, with us as God calls us to live this out together?***

1) **Confess** - **God my heart does not care for the vulnerable & unloved like you do. Can you confess this?** Confession=agree with God about your rebellion. 1-not doing. 2-self-righteous doing.

2) **Repent** - **Repentance is to turn from our rebellion seeing it as deadly and detestable to God and to turn to Him and His way seeing Him as beautiful and freedom.** How do we do this? I think it begins by answering the question we asked a while back ...

**Why does God care so much for the vulnerable and unloved? What do you think?**

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. **“Father” is the key. God is perfect Father.**

*We were created to live as His sons/daughters in a loving relationship with him – so we would be protected and cared for in His perfect love. Sin broke the world – and makes many live as vulnerable and unloved and even unlovely lives. This is the beginning of repentance. We must see and believe the reason God cares for the vulnerable and unloved.*

*God says - this is not the way it is suppose to be.*

*He created us for more – to live with Him under His loving provision, protection, and care.*

**This moves our heart even more to see God as beautiful and freedom as we see it is not just the orphan, widow, homeless, refugee, or alien who is vulnerable and unloved; but ...**

**You and I are vulnerable, unloved, and unlovely a part from Christ's work on our behalf.**

**Can you see you are vulnerable apart from Christ?** *What keeps you from seeing this? Physically - your comfort (money, stuff, family) What keeps you from seeing it spiritually - that without Christ you are under God's judgment and sentenced to be separated forever? PRIDE*

**Can you see you are unlovely apart from Christ?** *What keeps you from seeing this? Your pride (I cannot be that broken and full of sin – unlovely before God, because then I am hopeless. What if all your loveliness in your own eyes was taken away and you stood before God – unlovely.*

**Your only hope would be Jesus & his unconditional love that moved him to you.**

***For apart from Christ purifying us – we are defiled – unlovely before Holy God.***

**This is our condition before holy God – without Jesus.**

**We are vulnerable – under judgment / and unlovely – not acceptable – because of our rebellion.**

*Only God can and could secure a place of care and protection for the hopelessly vulnerable.*

*And only God would want to secure a place of care and protection for the hopelessly unlovely.*

***This is you and I before Christ – God wanted to and did secure a place of care and protection in his perfect love by casting Christ into a place of vulnerability and hatred.***

*Christ took our place on the cross carrying the weight of our guilt of rebellion against holy God and so doing he became vulnerable to consequences of sin in this world – brokenness and death. His body was broken and it died. You and I live under the consequences of our rebellion. Brokenness and death will overtake us and there is nothing we can do about it – we are hopeless, you are hopeless. Jesus took this on to free us from it. To secure something only God could secure for us. You are hopelessly vulnerable to the consequences of your rebellion – your mind and body are broken, they are dying and will die and you cannot stop it. But God did in Christ what we could not do – He secured life eternal. But he did more ...*

*When Christ took our place on the cross he also became guilty of all the rebellious sin that makes us **defiled** and abhorrent to holy God. He suffered our consequences becoming unlovely beyond words to holy God as he bore the full weight of the guilt and shame of our sin. You and I live under this consequence of our rebellion as well – we are hopelessly unlovely to holy God in our sin. Listen, you and I are hopelessly unlovely to holy God in our sin. – Just like death will overtake you one day. Your guilt, your unloveliness because of your rebellion will separate you from holy God forever. You are hopelessly unlovely because of the consequences of your rebellion – and there is nothing you can do about it. BUT ... Jesus took on your unloveliness to give you His pure love and acceptable standing before God. God did in Christ what we, what you could not do – he changed us, transformed us from unlovely to lovely, from detestable to acceptable, from defiled – to pure right child, son, daughter of perfect Father.*

**Have you been rescued and restored by Christ's work? Trust in Jesus and his work now.**

**If you have been rescued and restored by Jesus – Even now you are protected and loved, covered and accepted by the work of Jesus. He doesn't ask you to deserve or earn his love now – Christ did.**

**How do we respond if we have a rebellious heart toward the vulnerable and unloved?**

**1) We confess** - agree with God we have been rebellious to this call to care for the vulnerable and unloved – the widow, orphan, the homeless, the alien, and the refugee.

**2) We repent** - we turn to the Beautiful one who alone gives Freedom.

**3) We humbly seek to engage the vulnerable and unloved TOGETHER from God's heart.**

*"Every week, Mike would go out and feed the widows in the surrounding villages," said Brant Brooks, Mike Riddering lost his life in the W African nation of Burkino Faso Friday night – the result of his death lit up twitter and Facebook. His life affected many – even his family and friends.*

*Together is the key. This is not an individualistic call to obedience. That is you are not called to do this alone.*

*This is a "we" thing. This is the body of Christ going together for the gospel. This is our body going together.*

***Imagine what it could be like to be a part of a group of people who truly care for the vulnerable and unloved.***

**Our elders recently listed this – Caring for the vulnerable - as one of our 5 primary values as a body that help define how we live out our mission – together in the gospel and for the gospel.**

**What does this mean? We don't have to try and meet every need in our community.**

*SHARING SHED – Top Priority (Not the only one – but one of the main ways.)*

*How can you get involved in the Sharing Shed? Your CG can serve out there together – mine does.*

**Call the Shed # 636-439-6889 or write to info@TheSharingShed.org**

• and ask how you can get your CG involved.

- *Pray and get ready to give – we believe this is a primary way we can live out this value – so that means we think we need this building. We have been talking and praying – we will make a decision soon and have a plan ready to share by the end of February.*
- *Finally – pray how you might join others to engage the vulnerable – adoption, foster care – refugees?*