

## True Religion

### I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2,3 AP: Missions Prayer. CG.

B. Slide4 1 Tim.2:1-4 *I urge you, first of all, to **pray** for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for **kings** and **all who are in authority** so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by **godliness** and **dignity**. 3 This is **good** and **pleases** God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the **truth**.*

C. Pray for our new president: Father in heaven, we ask that **Your Name** would be **glorified** in our country, in Washington, & in this administration. **That You** would be **glorified** by Joe Biden and his family, his cabinet, & the congress. **That they** would know the difference between right & wrong. **And** that **your kingdom** would come, **that your will** would be done, on earth, (here in our country) *as it is in heaven*. Help our country to be a **humble, servant-like, sacrificial, loving people**. And please Heal our nation from an **us & them** mentality.

### II. Slide5 Intro: True Religion

A. Slide6 We have here, more of James **Straight Talk**. More litmus test of our Christianity.

B. Slide7 Religion is not a bad word. [step back to catch up **ch.1:26,27**]

1. **Religion** (5 x's in Scripture). There is **False** religion. **Worthless** religion. **Pure & undefiled religion**. **Self-imposed** religion (Col.2:23) Which basically is saying, **Clean up your act!** **But**, they don't tell you **how** to. They don't **empower** you to be able to do so. **And** they usually **don't give you any time** to work through your former life/ways).

a) Jesus says, **I** would like to *clean up your act*. **I** would like to *empower you* to do so. **And I** will be patient with you as you grow.

C. We often hear or say, *I don't believe in **religion** but a **relationship***. Well, yes & no. James, inspired by the HS believes in **religion...just the **right** kind, a **new** kind**.

D. **Religion** = (original sense) life under monastic vows. [Latin *religio* = obligation, reverence, to bind]

1. Basically, James is saying **Gods laws** became an **inner constraint** & are no longer chiefly an **external restraint**. **The difference?**

a) **Inner Constraint** = when we limit or restrain **ourselves**.

b) **External Restraint** = when one is kept under control. (a *straight jacket* of someone else's restrictions). **The difference?**

(1) If CM says you're not allowed to eat Meat on Monday, **nor** Tuna on Tuesdays, **versus** you choosing to fast from either.

2. **Religion is an outward expression of faith.**

a) **God loves religion that** tames its tongue. **God loves religion that** visits those hurting in the midst of their troubles. **God loves religion that** keeps themselves free from contamination.

E. **Some believe they can claim the name of Christ and continue to slander other Christians.** James 1st lists 2 (of many) signs indicating true religion. Having compassion upon orphans/widows/**the vulnerable** (1:27a). And keeping from the pollution of the world (1:27b)

F. We not only are supposed to have a **good theology** but to be able to apply it **socially**. The gospel is not just an *individual message*. **It has social ramifications.**

G. **Slide8 Everybody** is worthy of *dignity and love and value* (*imago dei*). **The fall**, alienated us from God and people. **Now division and hostility** exist between *races and classes and genders and so on*. **Then** the redeemer came and reconciled us both to **the Father** & to **one-another**. Jesus breaks down walls and makes us 1. *A diverse global family*. **And** what we see now is only a foretaste of Rev.7 of *every tribe tongue and nation standing before his throne*.

H. In ch.2 we'll continue to understand what **true religion & real faith** look like.

1. **What if we just made that our perpetual goal?**

- I. Over all theme: If you have **true** saving faith, you will practice impartiality.
1. Also, we will see people in terms of **character** instead of **clothing**.
  2. You will not **cater to** the **rich**, nor **ignore** the **poor**.
  3. You will love each person for the sake of Christ.
  4. Christian love means **treating others** the way the Lord **treats us** & doing it *in the power of the Spirit*.
  5. Are we free from the preoccupation with what people **have** rather than what they **are**? - Do we love & learn from the *rich in faith*?
- J. James made this a tightly constructed passage: **1st**, he **introduces** a principle (1), **then** he **illustrates** his point (2-4), **next** he **applies** it (5-13).

### III. Slide9a **THE PRINCIPLE INTRODUCED (1)** read vs.1

- A. Clearly, **faith in Christ** & **partiality** are incompatible.
- B. **Partiality/favoritism/respect of persons** defined: **It** literally means to **receive by face**. Meaning, looking on the outside. **It is to judge a book by its cover**. It is judging a person by **how they look**. [by their *clothes, cars, or color*]
1. **It is pandering** to someone, because they're *rich or influential or popular*.
  2. It's what **Samuel** did (in 1 Sam16) w/Jesse's oldest/tallest son Eliab.
  3. **It is** to hold prejudice [or to *pre-judge*].
- C. Saying it in the positive? **Treat everyone the same!**
- D. **Partiality** or **favoritism** violate the *3 Tests of true religion from ch.1* (compassion to the poor. being unstained from the world. and how you receive the word, v.21)
1. **True faith** leads to **real love**, not **partiality**.
  2. 2000 years ago in Jerusalem it look like a class/affluence issue. It could **Slide9b** be **Race. Age. Gender. Class. Affluence. Ancestry. Affinity** (what **tribe are you in?** Hipster, gangster, country western, techie, athlete, artist). Or, **Education** (God can use a PHD or a G.E.D.)

- a) **It is subtle.** This morning, I got my coffee, was sitting in my car. In a matter of moments 2 guys rolled up. The one in a real nice Mercedes, well-dressed, look like he had it all together. The other, his car was older, it didn't sound like it was running that great, had shabby clothes. **I immediately judged them both.** **This guy had the world by its tail. That guy not so much.** This all taking place in just a few brief moments, oh, *during my quiet time w/the Lord.*
3. **Slide10** \*How do you get over fawning over people? You get captivated by Jesus! (1b) *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.* [That's where the glory is ... **true glory**]
- a) See, there is *no caste system in Christianity. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.*

#### IV. Slide11a **THE PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED (2-4)** read vs.2-4

- A. (2,3) James fleshes out the issue w/a vivid illustration. They were guilty of 2 things:
1. Treating **rich visitors** with great respect & Treating **poor visitors** with no respect.
- B. *We still struggle with this...we're just better at **hiding** it now.*
- C. *It's often leveraging a relationship: What can I **get/take** from this relationship?*
1. Their **position** might be of help to you in the future. Their **finances**. Their **connections**. Even their **coolness!** (like it will rub off on you)
- D. (4) *So why can't I show partiality?* Because it's impossible to judge another person's motives simply on the basis of *outward appearance* or any other *external force*.
1. No one can determine **the heart** of another, especially in a 1st-time encounter. *That's why James says it's wrong.*
- E. **Slide11b** (4) **Judges with evil thoughts** - In his autobiography, *Mahatma Gandhi* wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to **the caste system** that was dividing the people of India. **So** one Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby church and talk to the minister

about becoming a Christian. When he entered the sanctuary, however, the **usher** refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with *his own people*. **Slide11c** Gandhi left the church and never returned. “If Christians have caste differences also,” he said, “I might as well *remain a Hindu*.”

## V. Slide12a **THE PRINCIPLE APPLIED (5-13)** read vs.5-13

### A. (8) Obey the Lord’s *Royal Command*.

1. Moses said it in Lev.19:18...It was **law** then, & it is **still today ... to love your neighbor as yourself**.
2. **Wow, what if all our relationships were guided by the *royal law of love*?**
  - a) Unfortunately we all have certain *built-in prejudices* that color our reactions to people. **Some against:** *divorced people, or emotionally ill people, or those who belong to a different political party, different ethnic or religious backgrounds.*
  - b) **We all have our *unwritten royal law of love* that states, *I’ll love you if you don’t speak w/an accent ... if you dress a certain way ... if you’re educated ... if...if...if.*”**
3. **Slide12b Two apples** up in a tree were looking down on the world. The **first apple** said, “*Look at all those people fighting, robbing, rioting - no one seems willing to get along with his fellow man. Someday we apples will be the only ones left. Then we’ll rule the world.*”  
Replied the **second apple**, “Which of us - the **reds** or the **greens**?”

### B. Slide13a If are a *respector of persons*, it’s **not bad hospitality**, no, you are **sinning**.

1. It’s **inconsistent** with **God’s character** (5). It’s **inconsistent** with **sound logic** (6,7). It’s **inconsistent** with **Scripture** (8-11). It’s **sin** (9). It makes you **guilty of the whole law** of God (10). It is just **as serious a sin as** adultery and murder (11). **God will judge** Sin (11).

### C. Slide13b 3 basic principles:

1. **Let the Scriptures** be your standard, **not how we were raised** (12)

a) Instead of excusing our prejudices w/statements like, “*That’s the way I was brought up!*” - “*That’s just the way I am!*”

(1) Allow God to change how you **think, speak, & act** by living according to his word.

2. Let **love** be your law.

a) Some of the most vulnerable people get treated the worse. **Ask**, *How can I love this person? - What’s needed to build this person up?*

3. Let **Mercy** be your message (13)

a) To **show** no mercy **is to receive** no mercy.

D. (13b) **Mercy triumphs over judgment** (not over *justice*, but judgment/*condemnation*)

1. It was once said that when we see a brother or sister **in sin**, there are 2 things we do not know: **First**, we do not know how hard he or she tried **not to sin**. **Second**, we do not know **the power of the forces** that assailed him or her. **\*We also** do not know what **we** would have done in the same circumstances.

E. **When I recognize my prejudice**, I will tell myself ***I lack sound information & am pre-judging*** that person, which makes my opinion ***irrational & unfair***.

F. **Keywords:** James, True religion, relationship, impartiality, no partiality, favoritism, respecter of persons, true faith, rich & poor, Gandhi, royal law.