

Religion That God Accepts

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[0:00] Let's take God's Word and turn to James 1. We'll read verses 18 through the end of the chapter. And humbly accept the Word planted in you which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

If anyone considers himself religious, boy, is that a big lasso that just about carals us all this morning.

[1:38] If anyone considers himself religious, yes, we're a very religious people here in America, or at least we think so. Just ask us.

According to an ABC News poll taken this summer, 83% of adult Americans consider themselves not only religious, but Christians, leaving only 13% who consider themselves non-religious.

So James has something to say to us. He's not talking in this passage, verse 26 and 27, he's not talking to the non-religious, to the atheist, to the agnostic.

Rather, he's talking here only to those who consider themselves to be religious. The 83%. And it probably includes us all here today, or we wouldn't be here, probably, if we didn't consider ourselves religious.

And what he says to us in these two verses is that there are two kinds of religion in the world today. There's the religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless.

[2:56] And then there's the kind of religion that God rejects as worthless. He accepts a certain kind of religion.

He regards it with delight. It's pleasing to him. He says yes to some religion. And then there's that which he rejects and says that it's worthless.

And the word there means vain. It's futile. It's empty. It's a big zero as far as God is concerned. Now, they may be very busy in the activities of religion, doing a lot, hearing sermons, praying, singing, giving, serving.

But it's all in vain. It's all worthless, James says. You know, it's a very sad thing to see men and women wearing their fingers to the bone in religion that God our Father rejects as worthless.

Some people go to great ends in their religion. And to think that some of them are involved in a religion that God says is worthless is a sad, sad thing.

[4:12] There is true Christianity and there is pretended Christianity. There is the real thing and then there is the imitation. I wonder if you know how to tell the difference.

And I wonder, do you know for sure which one you have? What kind of religion do you have? Now, it's to your eternal benefit to know this now in life.

Which kind of religion is yours? Because if you wait until the day of judgment, it will be too late to do anything about it. So I want you to see right off the bat that God is doing us an immeasurable favor to tell us the kind of religion he accepts and the kind that he rejects.

Well, what kind of religion does he accept? You know, sadly, most people don't even ask that question. They just assume that God should accept their religion.

I mean, why not? Why wouldn't he accept all that I do for him? And so whether or not God accepts their religion seems to rarely cross their minds. But that's an ignorant position to take because throughout the Bible we're met with worthless, unacceptable religion.

[5 : 36] As early as Genesis chapter 4, we meet these two kinds of worship, acceptable and rejected religion.

Cain and Abel. They both considered themselves religious. They both practiced their religion. They both brought sacrifices to their God. Abel's religion was accepted, acceptable worship to God. Cain's religion was rejected as worthless. And that so angered him that he murdered his brother. There is a religion that God does not accept.

He does not accept it. And we see it as early as Genesis chapter 4. And then our Lord Jesus exposed the worthless religion in his own days on the earth.

You hypocrites, he said. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.

[6 : 39] There's our word. Their worship is worthless. It's futile. It's in vain. Their teachings are but rules taught by men.

Matthew 15, 7 to 9. The Lord Jesus in his day met with worthless religion. The Apostle Paul preached against it. He talks about those who have a form of religion.

Just the outer husk. But deny the power of true religion. The facts are that once man sinned, there has always been more worthless religion in the world than there has been religion that God accepts as pure and spotless.

And worthless religion has always been a greater problem than no religion. Because worthless religion profanes the holy name of God in those who take that religion upon their lips.

So to just assume that God accepts your religion is an ignorant position to take in light of the scriptures, but it's also a dangerous position to take.

[7 : 44] Because James tells us this morning that this is something we can easily deceive ourselves about. The kind of religion we have is something we actually can deceive ourselves.

We can think our religion is accepted when in reality it is not. The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Who can know it? Jeremiah says. And James is concerned about that reality. Three times in chapter 1 he warns us about our potential to deceive ourselves.

This is the third time here in verse 6. The third time that he warns us about deception.

But this is even a worse kind. It's not being deceived. It's deceiving ourselves. Here's a man and he's digging a hole, a deep hole outside of his front porch.

[8 : 44] He's down 15 feet. He hauls away all the dirt and throws a dozen rattlesnakes down in the hole and then puts some sticks across the top of it and finds the leaves blowing around in his yard and covers the sticks and he goes to bed.

And the next day he comes out ready to go to work, steps off his porch and down into the pit he goes. He deceived himself. He tricked himself. He succeeded in tricking himself. And James says, you know, that's more common than you may realize.

We easily deceive ourselves. So James warns us, not once, but three times in this first chapter and the last two about deceiving ourselves.

We can draw the wrong conclusion about our religion. We can think our religion is accepted by God when it's not. We can think we're saved when we're really lost. We can miscalculate as to the truth about us.

This guy thinks he's the next American idol when he can't carry a tune in a bushel basket. And she thinks that all the guys are after her, which is so far from reality that it's a joke.

[9 : 58] And this guy in church today thinks that his religion is being accepted by God. And it's not. All three have succeeded in deceiving themselves.

Our capacity for self-deception is frightening. We saw it last week, didn't we? In verse 22, the man who merely listens to the word this morning, but does not do what it says, is deceiving himself.

If he leaves this place thinking I'm better off spiritually for having heard the word, he's deceiving himself. And now James is saying the same thing, only in different words.

When he says, if anyone considers himself to be religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself.

So, James is talking about self-deception. But there's no reason for you to be deceived about this business of whether your religion is accepted or rejected because James gives us three marks of the kind of religion that God accepts.

[11:08] You can know this morning whether your religion is accepted in heaven. There's three marks, three things that characterize the religion that God accepts as pure and faultless. Three ways to tell the difference between that which is acceptable and that which is worthless.

And it's all building from the preceding verses because these three things are also evidences of those to whom God has given the new birth. It all started there in verse 18 that he chose to give us birth through the word of truth.

Well, how do you know if God has chosen to give you birth? How do you know if you've ever been born again? Well, here's three marks of the new life that comes out of the new birth. Here's three marks of true religion.

Here's three marks of a man who is a doer of the word. James isn't content just to leave it at that, to say, now you all be careful and make sure that you're a doer of the word.

He now spells out what a doer of the word looks like in three critical areas. What does the word teach us to do? And ask us, are you doing these three things?

[12:18] So these three marks of true religion are marks of a doer of the word. They're marks of one who's born of God. Number one, a self-controlled tongue.

Two, an active love for needy people. And three, separation from worldliness. Now, this is not an exhaustive list. This isn't, there's just three marks of a true Christian, true religion.

No, not at all. This is, this is just a sampling of the perfect law that gives freedom. It's just a sampling of what a Christian looks like, what real religion looks like that God accepts.

It's a sampling of the righteous life that God desires. Number one, then, a self-controlled tongue.

Verse 26, if anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Now, it's not like James just is randomly selecting commands that he finds in the Bible. No, these samplings from the Bible are a most revealing and deliberate sampling.

[13:31] The first one deals with the tongue. That's not just something found in an isolated verse or two in the Bible, is it? Think of the book of Proverbs and how many times God weighs in in his word about the tongue.

Think of the epistles. We saw it Thursday night or Wednesday night here in Ephesians chapter 5. God weighs in on the tongue. The Bible talks a lot about the tongue.

According to Jesus, the tongue reveals the heart. We used to sing a song, what if your heart was made with a window on each side so that all could see not just outward charm but detect that there's inward harm.

What if your heart had a window on it? Well, Jesus is saying it does. It's that thing you call your mouth. That's the window on the heart.

Out of the abundance, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. So the mouth is just an overflow valve of the heart.

[14:40] What's in the heart is what comes out of the overflow valve. If your heart's full of milk, milk will come out. If it's full of Coke, Coke will come out. Whatever inside, whatever fills your heart is what comes out of your mouth.

If your heart is good and full of good things, then good words will come out of your mouth. If it's bad words that come out of your mouth, then we know what kind of heart you have.

A bad heart. That's what Jesus says, that if we listen long enough to an individual, they will reveal to us their heart. They'll tell us what their heart is set on by what they talk about.

And so consistent is this connection between the mouth and the heart that Jesus says that in the day of judgment, you'll be judged by what came out of your mouth during this life.

The judgment. You will be acquitted by your words and you will be condemned by your words because it will be a true reflection of your heart. Matthew 12 and verse 37.

[15:50] It's impossible to get a new heart without also getting a new tongue. That is a huge part of true religion. A self-controlled tongue.

It was during the 1904 to 1906 that there was a wonderful revival of true religion in Wales.

And the changes were seen and felt everywhere even in the coal mines. The trams of coal were pulled by horses that were blinded by the continual darkness deep beneath the surface of the earth.

But when many of these miners were converted and born again, there was confusion between the men and the horses because the miners quit talking like miners. they kept a tight ring on their tongue. Evidently, before they were converted, they were saying more than just go horsey and stop horsey.

[16 : 58] But their commands were so inner sprinkled with vulgarities and oaths and obscenities that now that they were converted and just said go horsey and stop horsey, the horses were confused and they turned their ears down and locked their hooves and production slowed down all throughout Wales until the horses could learn a new dialect of the Welsh language.

They didn't have all these filthy words in them. You see, when you get a new heart, you get a new tongue.

And that's what James is telling us here. If you have the real religion, the true religion that God accepts, you will maintain a tight control on your tongue.

True religion always affects our tongues. And if your tongue is not controlled, then no matter how religious you are, your religion is worthless.

And if you think otherwise, you are deceiving yourself. The mark of true religion is keeping a tight rein on the tongue.

[18 : 13] Again, it's a picture of the wild stallion being held in check by a bit and bridle. James will return to that in chapter 3. But we don't let the horse run wherever he wants to, but we control it.

With the bridle. And even so, where there's true religion, the tongue is not allowed to wag wherever it wants. But we put a bridle in our own mouths and we keep a tight rein on it, lest it should go down paths that are forbidden.

So we're very concerned about the perfect law that gives freedom. And what does this book say about where my tongue should go and where it shouldn't go?

What it should say and what it shouldn't say? I'm very concerned about that because true religion keeps a tight rein on the tongue. Now, James has much more to say about the tongue and he will say it in this letter.

And here he's not just talking about occasional slips of the tongue that are confessed and forsaken, but he's talking about the characteristic of the person.

[19 : 26] The habit, the habitual way with the person. is the stallion of your tongue bridled or left to run unchecked?

If it wants to gossip, do you let it gossip? If it wants to tear others down, do you let it just tear others down? If it wants to brag, do you let it brag?

If it wants to talk back to mom and dad, do you let it talk back? If it wants to gain a laugh from an off-colored joke, do you just let it?

If it wants to twist the truth and embellish the truth, do you let it? Do you just let it go wherever it wants to go? If it wants to misuse the name of the Lord, do you just let it do so?

James says, if that characterizes you, my friend, if you have a tongue that's uncontrolled, then your religion is worthless. John Blanchard says, a tongue uncontrolled by the speaker is a sign of a heart uncontrolled by the Savior.

[20 : 37] And it is a pitiful religion that does not have enough power to enable a man to bridle his own tongue. That's a religion that God our Father considers worthless.

The second mark of religion that God our Father accepts, not only a self-controlled tongue, but an active love for needy people. Verse 27.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress. people with true religion are serious about their tongues.

We saw that first. Now we learn that people with true religion are serious about their love for other people. Indeed, next to loving God, the greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourself. And these two great commandments, greatest commandments cannot be separated. Where you find love for God, you always find love for man. Remember John, when we studied through 1 John, said that.

[21 : 52] You're just kidding yourself. You're lying if you say that you love God and hate your brother. How can you love God whom you can't see and when you hate your brother whom you do see?

So these two tables of the law are not only found together in the Bible, the first table that has to do with our relationship to God and loving him and the second table of the law having to do with our

love for our fellow man.

They're found together in the Bible but they're found together in the same heart. Find real love for God and you'll find real love for man. Find real religion. A real relationship with God.

That's what religion is all about. And you find love for man. There's no right relationship with God. There's no true religion where there is wrong relationships with men that predominate in the person's life.

It's what Jesus is telling us in that series that we're memorizing in Matthew 5, 23 and 24. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, you're practicing your religion and it comes in your mind, oh, my brother, there's a breach of love over here.

[23:04] God doesn't say, that's all right. You can have true religion and just trample all over people. It doesn't matter what you do with people as long as you and me are good to go.

No, he says, there's a priority here. You just stop the whole business. You call a time out. You leave your gift at the altar and first go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.

What is he saying? He's saying, any religion that's worth its salt is marked by a love for others. In fact, this is the mark of discipleship to Christ, isn't it?

Of true Christianity. They will know that you're my disciples if you have love one for another. And by this, you will know if you have true religion that God accepts that you have love for one another.

Now, this love is a love in action. It's an active love. It's not merely with words, but with deeds and in truth.

[24:06] It's not saying to someone who's needy, be warmed and filled. See you later. No, this is a love that warms them and fills them if that's what they need.

It's an active love. Love that meets the needs of others. That gives practical help to people in need. If James says anything, he says true religion is practical religion.

It gets beyond the talk, religious talk, of the day. It knows how to get down in the gutters and do something. Notice the way James puts it.

The mark of true religion is to look after orphans and widows in their distress. That's the way he puts it. To look after orphans and widows in their distress.

Orphans and widows are given as a sampling of all people who are in distress. In distress is the word for tribulation.

[25:08] They're under the pressure of difficult circumstances. And is that not true of orphans and widows to be without husbands or without a father and possibly without a mother as well?

Throughout the Old Testament, orphans and widows are cited as the epitome of those in distress. They're right at the top of God's list because they were often the most needy and yet the most neglected.

They were the ones taken advantage of. They didn't have a man in the house to stand up and to defend them and to bring them justice. They didn't have a man to go out and to earn money so they were financially needy, socially needy, lonely, friendless, without strength, helpless.

And so caring for orphans and widows has ever been a mark of true religion. Read through your Old Testament. You'll find dozens of passages talking about caring for the orphans and the widows. I'll just read you one in Isaiah 10. Isaiah 1, 10 to 17 because it's in the context of religion that God is complaining about their worthless religion.

[26:26] Isaiah 1, 10 through 17. He's complaining about their worthless religion. Your cycle of religious festivals just roll on year after year. You're here.

You're doing your worship thing and it goes on year after year. But I am weary of them. I find no pleasure in your religion. Stop bringing meaningless offerings.

Your incense is detestable to me. I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your religious festivals and feasts my soul hates. They become a burden to me. I'm weary of bearing them.

And so when you offer many prayers I will not listen. And why? Why did God reject their religion as worthless? Because of their lack of love for their fellow man.

So he says your hands are full of blood. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong and learn to do right. Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed.

[27:23] Defend the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow. The specific expression of love that is active to the people in distress is cited as the fatherless and the widow ministering to them.

Dozens of passages could be multiplied. This is religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless. I don't believe it's just a coincidence that James here refers to God not just as God but God our father.

He's talking about orphans and he's reminding us that we who are in Christ how our heavenly father has loved us and has made us his own children when we were orphans.

If you're a Christian this morning you have partaken of the greatest demonstration of God's concern for those who are in distress. You are a part of the greatest example of God's taking care of the helpless.

There we were dead in our sins slaves of sin happy to live out a life under God's wrath and God chose to give us birth through the word of truth and he made us alive in Christ and he gave us repentance and faith and he justified us and made us right with God and then he adopted us and brought us into his family and he gave us a spirit of adoption so that we relate to him as our Abba our daddy we have experienced father the fatherly love of God and that love was more than words wasn't it what did it cost God to adopt you into his family when you were an orphan well it meant giving up the favorite of heaven it was Calvary love was expensive love he did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all and put him to grief and punished him and damned him in our place that we might be forgiven that we might be adopted and brought into his family and now all such children show their father's likeness by taking care of others who are in distress they were once the one in distress the greatest distress and God loved them and once tasting that love they then minister to others who are in distress you see it's from our father that we get a heart for the needy it's from our father that we get an eye for the needy so that we notice them in our life it's it's from our father that we get a hand to extend to the needy it's from the father we get gifts to give to the needy he fills us with a love that finds it more blessed to give and to receive and that love runs out to people in distress such as orphans and widows just as a sampling of the whole category on the second

[30 : 49] Wednesday of every month we gather prayer and our request that day that evening highlight those who are in distress among us who have special ongoing needs and we pray for those in distress that's one way to show your love active love for those in distress but but don't stop there come and come and pray with us but then ask what else can I do for these who are in distress is there some further way that I can alleviate something of the pressure of their circumstances there's the man on the Jericho road and he's beaten and he's robbed and he's stripped and he's half dead here's a man in distress and here comes two men who consider themselves to be religious the Levite and the priest but they show that their religion is worthless because though they see the man in distress they walk by on the other side without doing anything to alleviate his distress religion that

God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this to look after widows and orphans in their distress do you know God has placed people in distress along your road of life and they're there to test your religion they're there to show what kind of religion you have what will he do when he meets up with this guy that I plant and again I'm not talking about a slip once in a while we all walk by needy people without a prayer without an action of love I'm talking about the habit that's what James is it characterizes them they may be a Levite they may be a minister of the gospel they may be so busy in ministry they don't have time for this person in distress and James gets in our face and says minister then your religion is worthless quit preaching get out of the ministry make room for somebody that has true religion not just the outward form but the power of it what do you know of this vital sign of all true religion a religion that translates into practical love for needy people remember

James told us that both poverty and riches are trials remember that rather shocking revelation back in verses 9 10 and 11 he's talking about trials and he's not only talking about the poverty the trials of the poor but he's talking about the trials of the rich here's one of the trials of the rich what are you going to do with your riches man are you going to use it to alleviate the needs of those in distress or are you just going to selfishly consume it upon yourself he'll have harsh harsh harsh words in chapter 5 for those who do so real religion spends and is spent for those in distress third mark not only controlled tongue not only love in action for those in distress but third mark of real religion that God our Father accepts is a separation from worldliness now very often when we say the word worldliness some people get an idea about a checklist of five things and I don't do this and this and this they're all external little things and so we check them off and we say

I don't have a problem with worldliness and that is to miss altogether what the world means in the Bible notice what he says verse 27 religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless as this to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world now world here is the entire fallen race under the control of sin and hostile toward God it's corporate flesh it's the flesh in every individual only you put it all together and it's the whole system of the unconverted world that is controlled by sin and hostile toward God and James will tell us later in his letter that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God that's how hostile it is to God that to be its friend is to automatically be the enemy of God so there's there's no midway points here you're either on the world side or you're on

God's side as we say the world it's that evil system it's a very polluting place it's continually spewing out the filth of its anti-God thoughts and philosophies and attitudes and behaviors it pervades governments it pervades educational systems the entertainment industry the business world the sports world and sadly even many churches the world it promotes its philosophies and immorality its dishonesty and greed and selfishness and materialism and every other form of sinful behavior its priorities are upon temporal things not on eternal things its morality well it's that which works best for you not the perfect law that gives freedom its decisions are based on what you want to do rather than on what

[36:50] God commands and its value system is self centered rather than God centered John sums it up by saying the lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes and the pride of life these are the things that are in the world that's worldliness and it includes all approaches to everyday life that are pursued without any thought toward God and what he wants and what he commands any approach to everyday life that does not include what God says that's worldliness it's the failure to have God at the center of everything that we do we rather have self at the center that's worldliness and I trust you see that it's far more insidious it's far more present than just a list of five little things that you no longer do and that's the pollution that this world is belching out continuously into the air that we breathe it's a very hard thing to live in the world to interact with the world to minister in the world without becoming polluted by the world that's no easy thing my friend if you think it is you haven't understood what the world is yet it's a terribly difficult thing but it's the mark of true religion it's the mark of religion that has power to do what man cannot do by himself to keep oneself from being polluted spotted tarnished by the world and it's a present tense to keep on keeping oneself from being polluted by it's a process my friend this idea of keeping yourself from the pollution of the world true religion is serious about moral purity and holy living it doesn't just talk about it but it lives a life separated from worldliness it's all about getting rid of all filthiness verse 21

I told you James is one big unit in this letter it's not just a bunch of little verses scattered in without rhyme or reason he's building on what he said get rid of all moral filth that's that's the pollution don't let it spot you and pollute you get rid of it all of it it means constantly looking into the mirror of God's word so that you can see in the mirror oh I've got some of the world's filth on me I better keep looking and keep confessing and keep repenting and keep mortifying until this book has affected the way I live and I get rid of the moral filth it means not fitting in young people that's what real religion that God accepts means it means not fitting in but willing to walk out of step with the world's values and priorities means not loving it it means not being conformed to it it means not letting it influence the way you live to keep on keeping oneself from being polluted from the world means ever vigilant ever on the watch against it so as to not be spotted by the world the Department of Homeland Security has developed an advisory system to identify the current threat level for terrorism perhaps you've heard it as you walk through an airport green is the lowest risk for terrorist attack and then there's blue and then there's yellow and then there's orange and then there's red the severest risk of all we're somewhere between yellow and orange most of the time but James is telling us if you're a Christian in this world the color is always red the danger of this world polluting you is always red and you better live like it you better be on the lookout the highest alert in all you do aware that this world is trying to push me and squeeze me into its mold and as I'm watching this program there are powers that be right now trying to squeeze my mind into thinking the way the world thinks about the creation about morality about family life about what's important alert keeping yourself from being spotless from being spotted by the world that means constantly washing constantly washing and when we get to

James chapter four he'll tell us wash your hands you sinners purify your hearts you double minded that's something we must constantly do we must keep ourselves from the pollution of this world so I

have to ask you who's setting the standards in your life in the way that you live in the area of money how you get it how you spend it how you give it who's setting the standards in your way of thinking about sex and sexuality about the Lord's Day about dress about music about marriage and divorce because if you're not constantly rejecting the world's thoughts on these things I fear you're compromising with the world more than you realize because it's always belching out its filth you must constantly be rejecting it and washing and keeping your heart and mind and body and life pure you crying out to

God God make me less like this world and more like the Lord Jesus are you quite content to be accepted by the world and to live like the world if you've not declared war against the world James is saying your religion is worthless because religion that God our father accepts is pure and faultless as this to keep oneself from being polluted by the world sobering words so there we have them the three marks of religion that God accepts self controlled tongue active love for needy people separation from worldliness James is going to have a whole lot to say about every single one of those in fact it's kind of like an appetizer or perhaps like the index he's telling us what's in his letter he doesn't go into detail now he will starting next week chapter 2 he's going to go into detail in these same three areas throughout his letter but right now he just wants us to know that wherever these three things characterize a life there is the religion that

[44 : 21] God our father accepts as pure and faultless and wherever these three are absent doesn't matter what else is present the religion is worthless to God now we need to be clear about this James is not setting forth a new way to be saved as if our own self controlled tongues our own acts of love to needy people our own separation from worldliness could somehow make us right with God no not at all he's rather showing the fruits of all saving religion not the way to be saved but the way all saved sinners live there's a huge difference only the blood and righteousness the works and deeds of Jesus will save you but everyone who is resting on

Christ's works to save them will live this way controlled tongue active love to the needy and unpolluted!

by the world they all become doers of the word you see wherever the heart is the heart of Jesus is given in regeneration wherever the righteousness of Jesus is given in justification there also the holiness of Jesus is given in sanctification it all goes back to verse 18 he chose to give us birth through the word of truth and that new birth is the source of this transformed living new life always flows from the new birth and it's absolutely unthinkable for James he can't even fathom that someone would have a new birth and not live a new life and James is inspired by God to say the things that he says it is absolutely unthinkable to the

God in heaven that anyone he gives a new birth to would not live a new life because the new life given in the new birth is the life of God himself in the soul of man what power of religion it can't be hidden you can't hide the life of God it will always come out it will always make its presence known in all three of these areas and tons more self control love purity and that is because he is the one at work within us both to will and to do of his good pleasure he is the one who makes us doers of the word he is using trials and he is using his word to bring about this holy living that these three things comprise James does us a service he provides these words of James provide a window into first century Christianity do you ever wonder what were

Christians like in the first century 40 50 AD did they have it all together in these areas evidently not here we have a letter and James is telling us that even then not all who claimed the Christian religion had the real thing that many of them were deceiving themselves and needed this warning even though they had the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and his apostles and I simply say if they needed this warning what do we need 2,000 years later with all that's made its way into religion of man's thoughts and man's ideas how do we need to look again and say examine yourself to see if you've got the kind of religion that God our Father accepts many of the 83% are deceiving themselves don't you be deceived that's what

[48 : 40] James is saying don't you be deceived all those Jesus saves by free grace alone have these three marks of true religion not perfectly but it is nonetheless something that marks them something that's true of them it characterizes them it's the pattern of their life and when they have failures in speech and love and worldliness they own it they come to Jesus and they wash again in that fountain open for sin and uncleanness and confess their sin and turn once again from it with hatred and purpose of heart to walk in God's ways with a cry for pardon forgiveness and for true power of religion to live a new way and so I ask you what do you see if these three things do not

characterize your life and purposeful pursuit don't leave thinking well I'm a

Christian but I just need a little work in some areas James doesn't allow that answer my friend did you see it your religion is worthless and if you think otherwise you're deceiving!

stop the deceit come clean with God perhaps you've always considered yourself religious but you've seen this morning that yours is not the religion that God accepts it does not have the power of a new life and if you come up lacking this morning hear me the answer is not to try harder to control your tongue to love others and to not be worldly!

That will get you farther from the answer not closer you know what the answer is you know what James wants this passage to do to us it wants to chase us to Jesus come to Jesus just as you are with nothing good to say for yourself tell him what you are tell him what you're not and confess wash me Jesus save me Jesus empower me to live this new life Jesus and you will find him to be a Savior you bring to him your sins and he sends you on his way forgiven with his righteousness and with his spirit inside of you to empower you to live this way blessed Jesus there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins let's pray dying lamb we thank you that you died and rose again and you live for us this day thank you that in many of our lives you have saved us from a powerless religion that was just outward trappings the shell the form with no power thank you for not letting us spend our lives working our fingers to the bone on some worthless project of religion thank you for facing us with our sin and leading us to our savior thank you Lord Jesus that your blood will never lose its power power to save power to sanctify us until all sin will be gone altogether from us so wash us and cleanse us keep us watchful against the intrusion of worldliness against our own selfish hearts that would shut up our hearts from the people in distress around us and that would let our tongues wag wherever they wish come and be our strength be our strong savior and bring true salvation true religion where there is not the real thing this morning we ask for [52:23] Jesus praise amen!!!!