



Religion that God Accepts

The Letter of James tells us the sort of “religion” that God accepts:

“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” James 1:27

Religion does good in the world. But when people hear the word “religion”, is this what they think? Good things done in the world motivated by knowing God? Often they think of the outward actions: going to services, rituals, readings, prayers, keeping special days as important. Religions can become defined by the outward things people do; and then be used to distinguish & differentiate & even denigrate others. But Jesus came to make religion a relationship with God. A relationship which stems from our knowing God as a good and loving father who forgives our sins.

We pray because of our relationship with God. We read our Bibles because of our relationship with God. We attend church because of our relationship with God. We observe Easter and Christmas because of our relationship with God. We visit orphans and widows in their affliction because of our relationship with God. The inner motivation of our religion is God’s goodness, which we have experienced in the Lord Jesus Christ reconciling us to God. Our religion is both private and public: because it stems from knowing God in our own hearts personally; and will find all sorts of public expressions.

The Apostle Paul says:

“Therefore, ... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” Philippians 2:12-13

God is good and James’ definition of religion reminds us we have the immense privilege of participating with God in doing good in the world. James’ letter challenges us to ask: how is our relationship with God finding practical expression in our doing good in this world?

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