

James 1:27 – True Christianity

Poole, TSK, GreekLexicon, Reinecker, Calvin, Abbot, Barnes, Clarke, Geneva, Family, Gill, Handfuls, JFB, Henry, PNT, Robertson, Trapp, Vincent Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

Is true Christianity marked by **learning Bible doctrines**, by **going to church**, by **praying a lot**, and by **worshipping?** That's what the people of James' day argued.

Or is true Christianity marked by **saying "Merry Christmas"** instead of "Happy Holidays," **by voting conservative**, **by marrying in a church building**, **by baptizing your babies**, or by **giving money to Word and Deed sponsorship program?** That is what many people argue today.

Let us find God's answer about what true Christianity is on this New Year's Day in the year of our Lord 2020.

Our headings are:

True Religion is based on Christ

True Religion is doing good works

True Religion is living a pure life

Our goals are: **That you will reflect on what true Christianity is and then endeavor, with the help of his Holy Spirit, to live less superficial and more sanctified lives.**

27 **Pure** and **undefiled** religion **before God and the Father** is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their trouble**, and to **keep oneself unspotted from the world.**

True Religion is based on Christ

1. True religion is based on having an ardent faith in Jesus Christ.

a. "Religion" refers to "Christianity, "the only true belief system." Since no other religion requires ardent faith in Jesus Christ, all other religions are false. They only offer false promises.

b. Through faith in Jesus Christ, God brings a man into his family and adopts him as his child.

c. Since God is the one who brings man into his family, God must determine how that child lives.

d. How God requires that child to live is a definition of religion.

2. True religion that God expects of his children is pure and undefiled.

Pure means "clean." There are no inventions of men in it.

Undefiled means "without pollution."

These positive and negative distinctions were intended for emphasis.

3. The one who says, "I'm a true Christians but I'm not a fanatic," probably doesn't know what true Christianity is.

The true Christian knows that his life must be clean and pure and his actions must be clean and pure.

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: **Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.**

4. God expects his children to follow true religion from the heart – the heart regenerated by Jesus.

God knows fake actions! They stink!

True Religion is doing good works

1. True religion is seen in those who care for orphans in their stress, pressure, or afflictions.

This means "**to see, look out for, and take care of orphans.**" It is not the token gift to World Vision at Christmas time when you see the poor African child crying by the garbage dump. Hear God's Words!

Deuteronomy 10:18 "He administers **justice for the fatherless** and the widow, and **loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.**

So this includes recent immigrants.

2. True religion is seen in caring for widows in their stress, pressure, or afflictions.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, **Plead for the widow.**

Job 29:13 The **blessing of a perishing man** came upon me, And I **caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.**

You "visit" with the view to helping.

3. True religion is seen in caring about all who are suffering from stress, pressure, or afflictions.

James used **widows, orphans, and foreigners because they were in the worst situations** and they needed more help than others. But others need help as well.

The depressed. The crushing feeling of helplessness can be overwhelming.

Those chronically ill. There can be much pain and even physical mobility or ability issues.

The lonely. This is not only for the immigrant, but those estranged from relatives.

The poor. You know where your next meal will come from...or you can call your mother...do they?

Those going through marriage break-up. This is the worst break-up of all.

The elderly. The thought of being alone or dying alone can be painful.

Those who may have recently lost loved ones. That can trigger depression, anger, or bitterness!

Psalms 82:3 **Defend the poor** and fatherless; **Do justice to the afflicted and needy.**

Isaiah 58:7 Is it not to **share your bread with the hungry,** And that you **bring to your house the poor who are cast out;** When you **see the naked, that you cover him...**

Matthew 25: 35 'for I was **hungry and you gave Me food;** I was **thirsty and you gave Me drink;** I was a **stranger and you took Me in;** 36 'I was **naked and you clothed Me;** I was **sick and you visited Me;** I was in prison and you came to Me.' ⁴⁰ "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

4. True religion is not seen in carnal (fleshly) living.

Carnal living means living for the enjoyment of the things of this world and ignoring spiritual duties. (We get the word "carnivore," a meat (flesh) eating animal, from this word.)

Translated today, the carnal one is the one who is selfish and **does only what gives him physical or emotional pleasure,** like eating too much, drinking too much, spending inordinate time on wasteful things like sports or computer games - **acting like selfish babies.** (Babies would take all your attention if they could...The more they get, the more they want. They don't think about the needs of others; they want their needs met first.) The carnal are spiritually immature.

5. So prove that you hold to the true religion by sacrificing yourself for the good of others (based on your faith in Jesus).

Get your hands dirty by helping the poor. **There are no good works by proxy!** You have to do the work by yourself.

6. Be quiet about your Christianity if you don't intend to personally work for the kingdom.

Why be quiet? If you talk Christianity but don't do good works, you will give Christ a bad name.

7. Even zeal by itself means nothing, absolutely nothing, without work!

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. **These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**

True Religion is living a pure life

1. True religion is seen in valiant attempts to protect your soul from worldly corruption.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may **prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

And this is the only way a Christian will grow to spiritual maturity.

2. Those that don't pursue true religion would find themselves spiritually immature, carnal.

A good example of this was in Corinth.

1Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, **could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal,** as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

Apostle Paul had to deal with the fact that the Corinthians were still **spiritually immature** after many years of being Christians. They just had not grown up. They learned the basics: Who God is, how man fell into his condition, and how God saved man from his sins. And that was not wrong. Babies (new Christians) are expected to be that way. (You always start with ABC's before reading.) But after many years, they were still drinking milk. Their stomachs were not ready for solid food – for progress in spiritual things...just like a baby's stomach is not ready for solid foods. Their faith may be been real, but it was very weak!

3. Because the Corinthians were carnal

They could **not be a true blessing to their families.**

They **could not be as helpful in the church.**

They were **a hindrance to the kingdom of Jesus Christ spreading.**

So Paul had to show the Corinthians how to fix this error and teach them to **grow-up** by **feast on the Word** of God and **live like Christian adults!**

4. Pomp and ceremonies, singing all the Christmas songs, giving gifts to the poor, and working in a soup kitchen to feed the poor are not enough; you need to have a clean and pure heart before the Lord.

5. For your faith to be strong, Jesus prays for you – day and night.

John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, **but that You should keep them** from the evil one.

Conclusion:

True religion, true Christianity, is based on **true faith in Jesus Christ.** You trust him with all your heart that he lived and died for you. You must then show that true faith by **clear good works** – showing kindness to widows, orphans, and foreigners, among others. And you must continue to **pursue things that strengthen your faith.**

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Keep your heart nourished with the Word and sacraments so your love for God will be strong and you will be faithful in worship.

2. Keep your hand opened so you can show God's love to the needy and share what God has given to you in such abundance. This might include giving advice...giving rebukes...or shoveling snow for your neighbor.

3. If either of this is missing in your life you are not showing true Christianity. It is superficial. You need to ask God to let the Word sink in more. When the Word sinks into your soul you will not only worship God better, but you will surely be showing more kindness to your neighbor.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you can't worship and your good works mean absolutely nothing to God. He doesn't give them a 2nd look. But if you want to be able to worship and to do good works that would please God, then ask him to make you his child. He will do so if you acknowledge that Christ died for you.