

TITLE: James (Lesson 8)

TEXT: James 1:26-27

INTRO: "It is self-deception to have religious practices that do not lead to an ethical lifestyle."
Life Application Bible Commentary

I. (vs. 26a) The religious imposter.

A. Someone who is of the opinion he is religious who fails the test.

NOTE: James audience was familiar with religion. Acts 26:5

B. James applies a test that reveals hypocrisy.

1. The tongue.

NOTE: James is building on his instruction in vs. 19. Be "slow to speak".

C. How to *bridle* the tongue.

NOTE: vs. 19-21 We must think before speaking and control our emotions.

II. (vs. 26b) A vain (worthless) religion.

A. Based on deception.

NOTE: This is the third dangerous deception James is dealing with. The first in vs.16 dealt with a distorted view of the character of God. The second in vs. 22 dealt with thinking that hearing God's Word and not doing it was sufficient.

B. To rationalize that we are not defiled by an unbridled mouth.

NOTE: Jesus instructed the religious people of His day who equated ritual cleanliness to righteousness instead of recognizing sin is a heart problem. See Mark 7:1-9; 14-23.

1. A changed heart is reflected in changed speech.

2. Our words speak louder than our actions.

3. Trying to deceive others we end up deceiving ourselves.

4. Failure to submit our tongues to God is an expression of sinful rebellion.

NOTE: An unbridled tongue includes lying, cursing and swearing, slander, filthy language, gossip, angry outbursts, harsh criticism, complaining etc. *Eph. 4:29*

III, (vs. 27) Pure and undefiled religion.

A. Based on a relationship with God, not human rationalizations.

NOTE: We are prone to rationalize sinful behaviors.

B. The fruit of personal purity.

NOTE: Hypocrites can engage in rituals. Righteousness is the fruit of purity. Eph. 5:9

C. Acceptable religion is practical.

NOTE: James is not focusing on our church services, but rather on our everyday lives.

D. Christian conduct is ministering to the needs of others.

NOTE: Lev. 19:18; Isa. 1:16-17 Giving with no expectation of receiving in return.

E. Christian character does not neglect personal purity.

NOTE: John 17:14-18

CONCLUSION: James is teaching that the only acceptable religion is that which is expressed with pure conversation and practical conduct.