

MY RELIGION

JAMES 1:26 • TV205B

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James 1:26

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”

Here is our subject today: **“MY RELIGION.”**

James wrote in **James chapter 1: verse 26**; *“If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.”*

Now; I’m not particularly fond of the word religion; it has been used to cover all sorts of evil and all sorts of corruption, I know that. James uses it in the text; he uses it twice, “religious” and “religion.”

Then, Paul uses the word in **Acts 26:5**. He talks about his religion in which he exceeded many his equals. He also talks about his religion in **Galatians 1:13**.

As I say, I am not particularly fond of the word religion. There is much religion in the world, all sorts of religion. Good things are done today in the name of religion. People are fed and people are clothed.

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A lot of good things are done in the name of religion and a lot of evil things are done in the name of religion; much evil is done in the name of religion and always has been. Men even kill in the name of religion.

I was in Ireland in 1972 during the thick of much religious battle over there. They killed people in the name of religion. They are doing it over in the Middle East. Men compete for fortune and fame in the name of religion.

So, we have enough that goes on under the name of religion to turn all of us against the word religion. But whether we choose to use the word or not; (here is what I am saying), it is used today, whether we choose to use it, whether we like it, or how much we prefer being called a believer or being called a Christian or being called a person who loves Christ.

The word religion is here to stay. And to the world and to men in general you are religious. If you believe in God you are religious. If you don't drink or gamble or curse you are religious. If you go to church you are religious. If you carry a Bible you are religious.

So, that is what they say; "you are religious and you have religion." They will say, "So and so got religion." Somebody will say that they are saved and others will say, "You've got religion, or you've got religious."

Well, to men I am religious and I have a religion. But, the question that I am dealing with today is this; what is my religion? What men call religion, what is it that I believe? What is my faith? What is my Christianity? What is it that I believe?

I want to define for you my religion as best I can. I will give you seven or eight things. If you wish to, jot these things down. But, this is my religion.

First of all: My religion begins where everything begins, where everything always has begun; my religion begins with God.

That's right; it begins with God. True religion arises from a right knowledge of God. Everything begins with God. God is Light; there is no light without God. God is truth and God is love.

The Bible starts with God. You can pick up the Bible and open it to page one, it says; "*In the beginning God.*" So, my religion begins with God.

You can ask the average person "what is your religion?" He will start with, "Well; I am a Baptist." No, my religion does not begin with John the Baptist or any other Baptist; my religion begins with God.

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In **Psalm 115: verses 2 and 3**, it says; *“Wherefore, should the heathen say, where is your God?”* That is what David wrote. They said, *“Where is your God, where is your God?”*

They knew where their gods were; they kept their gods in their idol temples and heathen temples on their shrines or altars. They knew where their gods were; they were where they put them. They stay right where they leave them.

But, David said; *“Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.”* In **Psalm 135** he repeats that; *“But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.”*

Let me tell you some things about God. This is what I believe about God; my God is absolutely sovereign. There are definitions of the word sovereign but it is right in the Word, r-e-i-g-n; God reigns, God rules.

God reigns in creation. God reigns in providence. God reigns in salvation with total, complete, authority. Almighty God doeth according to His will, not according to the creature’s will, *“but according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.”*

He said in **Isaiah 46**; *“I have spoken; I will also bring it to pass. I purposed it; I will also do it,”* God says. *“Can anybody stay his hand or say unto him what doest Thou?”*

My God is immutably, infinitely, unchangeably, absolutely, sovereign in all things. Nothing takes place of which God is not the first cause. He permits men to do what they will but in doing so they carry out His divine, eternal purpose and will.

Second: My God is holy.

Isaiah said, *“I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. The cherubims, the seraphims, and the heavenly host cried; holy, holy, holy; God is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence.”*

Our God can accept nothing but perfection. He is immutably, infinitely, immaculately, holy, holy. He cannot look upon sin even when that sin is in His beloved Son; *“He spared not his own Son.”* Our God is holy.

Then, our God is just and righteous; *“He will in no wise clear the guilty.”* The judge of the earth will do, shall do, and always has done that which is right. He cannot fellowship with sin. He cannot commune with sin. He cannot look upon sin. Our God is just and He is righteous.

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My God is love. He said, *“I have drawn you with an everlasting love. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

But God, who is rich in love, rich in mercy, *“for His great love wherewith He loved us, herein is love; not that we love God but God loved us; God is love.”*

I hear people always saying, “God is a God of love.” That is not true; God is love. There is no love apart from God. When you say that God is a God of love you seem to indicate that the principle of love is here and God meets the requirements or the standards.

God is love; *“in him we live and move and have our being.”* He doesn’t live and move and have His being in us. *“In him we live and move and have our being.”* God created the world. Everything is in God; God is in everything. God is love; God is Light. Take away God and there is no light.

God is life. I see bumper stickers that say, “God is alive.” That is foolishness! That is a foolish statement; a man who carries a thing like that doesn’t know God.

God is not alive; God is life, there is a difference. If you say that God is alive you are saying that “here is life and here is God and He meets the requirements.” No sir; God is life! If God is not life, you don’t have life. All life comes from God.

Our God is love. Our God is merciful, merciful, and infinitely merciful. He said to Moses; *“I will be merciful.”* Moses said, *“Lord; show me your glory; I would like to see your glory.”* He said, *“Here it is; it is my goodness; I will be merciful.”*

The average person tries to picture God as an unmerciful God. He is merciful and He is gracious. God is gracious. *“He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”* His justice will be honored, His righteousness satisfies but *“He delights to show mercy;”* He delights to.

He delights to forgive. My God is eternal. He is unchangeable. He said, *“I am the Lord; I change not.”* He said, *“The gifts and calling of God are without change.”* What He does, He has always done. What He will do He does now and always has done.

God is unchangeable; He never forgets anything and never learns anything. *“God declared the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying; my council shall stand; I will do all my pleasure.”* Nothing slips up on God. Nothing takes God by surprise.

**“Oh Lord my God
When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds that Thy hand hath made.**

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**I see the stars
I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.**

**Then sings my soul
My Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art.”**

How big is your God? Is your God and idol, a figment of your imagination, or is He the eternal, invisible, almighty, infinite, immaculate, unchangeable, just, righteous, holy, God of the universe, who does what He will, when He will, with whom He will?

And, *“He worketh all things according to the council of His own purpose and according to His own will. That is the only true God and that is eternal life.”* That’s my religion.

Third: My religion accepts the truth not only about God but the truth about men.

There is no way that you can exalt God too high. You cannot lift Him too high and you can’t exalt Him too high. *“The earth is his footstool. He considers the nations as a drop in the bucket, the inhabitants as grasshoppers.”*

“He sitteth on the circle of the earth. He doeth his will in all things.” There is no way you can put God too high. You can’t brag on God too much. You can’t put man too low; no way can you put man too low.

Listen to Paul; it is written, *“There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are altogether become unprofitable; there is none good, no not one,”* not one.

When that was written, you were included. *“All the world is guilty before God. All have sinned; all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. From the soul of your foot to the top of your head; there is no soundness in you, nothing but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores.”*

The wise man said; *“God made man upright and he sought out many inventions.”* God created him high and he fell low. *“By one man sin entered this world and death, (spiritual death), passed upon all men, for all sinned.”*

“How can he be clean that is born of a woman,” Job said. *“Behold the moon and the stars they shine not. The heavens are not clean in God’s sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinks iniquity like water.”*

“He remembereth our frame; He knoweth that we are dust. Man at his best state is altogether vanity. We are all as an unclean thing. We all do fade as a leaf.” Even our righteousness is filthy rags in God’s sight.

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“What the law saith it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” That’s my religion; you can’t put God too high and you can’t put man too low.

Fourth: My religion recognizes the preeminence, the glory, the person, and the work, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the center of our religion. He is the heart of my religion. He is the High Priest, Prophet, and King of my religion, Jesus Christ the Lord.

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first but also to the Greek. Therein, is the righteousness of God revealed.”

Jesus Christ is God. I didn’t just say that He is just the Son of God; I said that He is God. I didn’t say that He was a messenger from God, Nicodemus said that. I said that He is God Almighty.

“I and My Father are one,” Christ said. I can’t explain the trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I see it throughout the Bible. God said, *“Let us make man.”* Who is He talking to? *“In our image let us create man.”*

The Father spake; *“This is my beloved Son. The Holy Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove. There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit.”* It is all the way through the Word.

I just know that *“unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.”*

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” That’s right; Jesus Christ is God.

Jesus Christ is man *“and the Word became flesh.”* That’s incarnation; God became a man. You might say, “Explain that.” I can’t do it; I can’t do it; I just know that *“behold, the Lord Himself, will give you a sign, a virgin shall be with child and you shall call His name Immanuel.”*

What does that mean? It means *“God with us.”* He took our nature. He took our place. He took our guilt and He took our sin.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah. All the way through the Old Testament, the prophecies, the promises, and the pictures, set forth a Christ, a Redeemer, a Messiah, the Righteous one,

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a prophet like Moses, a priest like Melchisedek, a king like David who will come and redeem a people.

Do you know who that is? It is Jesus Christ. The Old Testament says, “Someone is coming.” The four Gospels say; “He has come.”

Jesus Christ is our representative, *“as in Adam I die; in Christ I am made alive. By one man’s disobedience I was made a sinner, by His obedience I was made righteous. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly. By man came death; by man came the resurrection from the dead.”* He is our representative, Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ is our righteousness. It says in the Scripture; *“But of God are you in Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”* All the holiness I need is in Christ.

Now listen to me; I know that when we come to know Christ our hearts are changed and our lives are changed. We have a new nature; we walk in righteousness and truth. We want to please God. The love of Christ motivates us and constrains us.

But, our acceptance with God is Christ. Our holiness before God is Christ. Our righteousness before God is Christ. Abraham being in Christ was just as accepted in the sight of God when he was offering Sarah to Abimelech as when he was offering Isaac on Mount Moriah to God.

Now that’s right! Christ is our justification, our sanctification, and our holiness. You take it out of the hands of Christ and put any of it into the hands of man, you don’t have any holiness and you don’t have any righteousness.

Now, that’s so; He is our righteousness. He is the center; He is the heart; He’s the mountain peak; He’s our righteousness, Jesus Christ. He’s our acceptance. Wherever I am, I’m accepted in the beloved.

Jesus Christ is our substitute. That is what Paul said; *“I preach the gospel to you, how Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried and rose again according to the scriptures.”* We are redeemed in Him.

Jesus Christ is our great, high priest. We have the privilege of coming boldly before the throne of grace one way, not in an earthly tabernacle, not through an earthly priest, not through our deeds and not through our religion, but we have the right to come boldly into the presence of God with Jesus Christ our great, High Priest, as our Intercessor, our sin-offering, and as our Substitute.

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Jesus Christ is our Mediator. The Scripture says, *“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

Fifth: Now I want you to listen; my religion consists of a total commitment to Christ, a total commitment to Christ.

I am not just talking about a decision. I’m not just talking about walking an aisle or shaking a preacher’s hand. I’m talking about a personal, inward, willing, loving, commitment to Jesus Christ.

Now; listen to Paul and here is your definition of faith if you are interested, Paul said in **2 Corinthians 1:12**; *“I know whom I have believed.”*

You see, he didn’t say, “I know what I believe,” though he did. He didn’t say, “I know when I believed,” though he did. He is saying, *“I know whom;”* my faith and confidence is in a person. The object of my faith and confidence is a person; *“I know whom I have believed.”*

“I am confident; I am persuaded that he is able to keep (do all that He said, all that He promised). He is able to keep, (to redeem, keep, and justify), that which I have committed.”

You see, salvation is a committal. David said, *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* I don’t know whether He is yours or not but He is my shepherd; *“I shall not want.”*

Christ is not just first; He is first and last. He’s not just the most important part of a man’s life but He is that man’s life. Everything here is just filling up space and time until God destroys it and makes it all things new in Christ.

When a man commits to Christ he is not just turning over a new leaf, getting religion, or quitting a few habits; he is making a personal, inward, sincere, eternal, commitment to Jesus Christ. He is Lord over all or He is not Lord at all.

This generation does not know anything about the Lordship of Christ; it is accepting Jesus as our Saviour and doing our own thing. We are going where we want to go, we do what we want to do, be what we want to be, and just say what we want to say; because “I made my decision for Jesus.”

Salvation is the Lordship of Christ. It is the reign of a person. Christ said, *“He that cometh to me must forsake all that he hath for he cannot be my disciple. If any man loves husband, wife, brother, sister, mother or father, his life more than me, he is not fit to be my disciple.”*

“No man having put his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” These are the words of Christ. He is Lord. It is a committal; it is a total commitment.

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I hear them say, “Try Jesus; you will like Him.” You don’t try a Lord; you don’t try a King, you bow to a King. You bow to authority. You submit that Christ is Lord.

Sixth: My religion is not a creed, it is not a doctrine, and it is not a denomination or a system of theology.

Our religion is a living principle. It is a living Lord and it is a living union with Christ. I don’t just believe that there is a God; I believe God. There is a difference; the devil believes that there is a God but he doesn’t believe God.

I don’t just believe in Jesus Christ; I believe Christ. Anybody that has a calendar believes that Jesus Christ lived on this earth but they don’t believe Him. We don’t accept Jesus; we receive Him; we embrace Him and we live by Him; we live from Him. We don’t just believe in the resurrection; we walk with the living Lord.

Actually, believers never die; they sleep; *“death hath no more dominion”* because death can’t touch Christ and Christ is my life. Christ is our life. *“When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall you appear with him in glory.”*

Our religion is a living principle. Somebody said, “Well; this is my doctrine; this is my denomination or this is my creed;” that is not our religion; our religion is a person.

Seventh: Now watch this; my religion produces a principle in the heart; it produces something.

Our religion in Christ is not dead, it is living, and it is producing religion. It produces a principle in the heart of love for God and love for one another. *“We love Him because He first loved us.”*

He did love us but we also love Him. God seeks His people and they seek Him. God calls His people and they call on Him. Anytime you find a seeking sinner you will find a seeking Lord. Anytime you find a loving sinner you will find a loving Lord.

Anytime you find a calling sinner you will find a calling God. *“He that loveth not knoweth not God.”*

This religion of Christ produces an inward principle of love for God. It is not just a profession. It is not just a claim; it is an experience. It is not just a profession it is an experience.

Listen to **Ephesians 4:32**; and this is the principle that acts toward others; in other words, John said; *“he that hateth his brother, how can he love God? He that loveth not knoweth not God.”*

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You see; God is love and where God dwells, love dwells. That is what I am saying. You see; this relationship with God is God dwelling within us. Christ said this; *“I and my Father will come and dwell with you.”*

And, this God of love, God who is loved, dwelling within us, produces love. Listen to **Ephesians 4:32**; *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* Paul said, *“The love of Christ constraineth me.”*

The love of God is not only our motive for godliness, our motive for obedience, but it is that motive that produces love from us to others. Men will only love when they love God. They will only love others when they love God.

Men will only obey God when they know God. Men will only preach Christ when they love Christ, have seen Christ, and know Christ. It says of Isaiah *“when he saw his glory he spake of him.”*

Now lastly: My religion impresses on me three goals and they are not attainable in this life, but they are goals which will be realized in eternity. My religion impresses upon me three goals; these are the three goals, now listen to them:

First of all: This relationship with God impresses upon me this goal, total commitment to Christ.

No man has a total commitment to Christ in this life. That is what we want. That is what we desire. That’s the very beat of our hearts, total commitment to Christ.

That is what Paul was saying in the **Book of Philippians**; *“O that I may win Christ and be found in him. O that I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”*

He knew Christ. He wanted to know Christ better. Paul was in Christ and he knew he was in Christ but he wanted that relationship to be stronger, to be richer, and to be truer. *“O that I may know Christ,”* total commitment.

No believer is satisfied with his thoughts, satisfied with himself, or satisfied with his progress or satisfied with his righteousness; he is satisfied with Christ but never with himself, total commitment.

Secondly: We want total communion with Christ.

Someday we will. John said *“when he comes, we will see him as he is and we will be like him.”* We are going to be just like Him, total communion with Jesus Christ.

Thirdly: We will have total commitment to Christ, commitment, communion, and conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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When we see Him we will see Him as He is. We will know Him and we will be like Him.

Let me give you a summary; this is my religion.

First of all: God is God.

Secondly: My religion; man is lost and he needs a Saviour. He needs mercy, he needs grace, and he needs forgiveness.

Thirdly: Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; there is no other.

“Almighty God has exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue should confess that he is Lord.”

Fourthly: Salvation is a new creation. It is not a profession or a decision, it is a new creation. Faith is in a person. The object of faith is Christ and salvation produces the fruit of the Spirit. It produces a godly walk, conversation, and conduct.

Last of all: Christ is coming to make us like Himself.

“He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as he is pure!”