

# What Religion Are You?

September 9, 2018 – James 1:17-18; 26-27

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*“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created. .... If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. [- θρησκωσ - Religious, To Live the Way God requires or To live a good life, Religious beliefs vs. Moral Behavior] 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.”*

There are two obituaries sitting on my desk at the parsonage. One is for a 54 year old woman, the other is for a 21 year old man.

Even though neither one was a member here at St. John’s on the day they died, according to the information that I have, as Believers. Both died believing in Jesus Christ as their one and only Savior from Sin, death, the devil. Saved from Hell and thus they are both residing in Heaven even now.

The reason that St. John’s exists is not to be a place of recreation and social activities, even though we can enjoy one another’s company, but the reason that St. John’s exists is to proclaim the Salvation of God to our families, our congregation, our community, and our world.

To proclaim that simple, plain and straight forward Message that:

**John 3:16 – That God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal Life.**

**Mark 16:16 - Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved.**

**I Peter 3:18 – For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.**

To clearly proclaim the fact in a changing world and life, that God does not change like shifting Shadows. We know God does not change because God tells us so in The Bible. God does not lie, God does not change His opinion, and this is what God tells us through the inspired writer JAMES.

**Vs. 17 - Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows.**

In this section of Scripture, the half-brother of Jesus writes to *the 12 tribes Scattered among the nations*, that is to Believers scattered all over the WORLD.

The Book of the Bible known as James focuses on Sanctification in the NARROW sense.

The Good Works / Fruits of faith that a Believer will do as a Christian.

A simple explanation of the Book of James is to use words that James himself uses:

*“Faith without Works is Dead”*

In other words, as Christians our faith shows itself by doing good works.

Some of those works are listed by James in this section.

**Vs. 26 – If anyone considers himself (a believer) religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.** [- θρησκευσ - Religious, To Live the Way God requires or To live a good life, Religious beliefs vs. Moral Behavior]

Gossip and back stabbing with nasty words and talking behind the back of other people is a sin against the Lord God. God through James later in this Letter tells us that a tongue out of control is like a small spark that sets a forest on fire. (James 3:5-6)

God, through James the half-brother is Jesus, also tells us:

**Vs. 27 – 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.**

It is true, we cannot work our way into heaven, and as a matter of fact we are told in:

**Ephesians 2:8-9 – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works.”**

As Christians when we spend our time proclaiming the word and helping those in need we do not have time to get into mischief and trouble with sin.

The Bible teaches that our salvation is **DONE!** Christ Jesus Finished our Salvation on the Cross of Calvary, thus we reflect on the Words of Christ on the Cross – IT IS FINISHED!

Mankind has come up with all kinds of other religions in which humans need to **DO** something to earn salvation, to get to heaven.

When hearing this text, one could get the impression that salvation is by works.

Yet a question to ask is: *“How many Widows and Orphans do we need to help before we earn heaven?”* Or *“How many Orphans and Widows do we need to help before we wipe away our sin?”* We could and never can help enough people to earn heaven or to undo sin. Instead, Jesus has wiped away our sin by His Perfect Life for us, His innocent suffering and death on the cross for us, His payment of hell for us and His victorious Resurrection demonstrates that He won the victory For Us!!!

At one time we were all Lost Orphans and Misplaced Widows.

But God made us His Children. We are no longer without our Heavenly Father. We are no longer lost and separated from God.

**John 14:18 – Jesus says, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.”**