



them (Matt. 28:20). We read of a God who demands that salvation must be worked out with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Let us ask, “Does this mean we earn salvation for ourselves?” The answer is most certainly “No”. For no man is able to merit anything before God (Luke 17:10), but we must

accept His grace on the conditions He has set before us, and allow the love shown us to compel us to serve Him as it did the apostles (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Pet. 1:22; Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus came to fulfill the Old Law and, ultimately, replace it with His Religion—the Perfect Law of Liberty (Jas. 1:25; Matt. 5:17-18). So, we may confidently say that not all religion is bad, worthless, or evil (though we do see such religion in the world). Let us be diligent, then, brethren to practice the pure and undefiled religion Jesus brought into the world—that which He Himself practiced as our Great Example. If we persevere in this, constantly growing in our faith and conforming to His image, then the entrance into His Heavenly Kingdom will be abundantly supplied to us (Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:4-11).



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## Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

14.5

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

January 29  
2012

## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

### Deacons:

Dean Bowers  
Eddie Cook  
Bill Davis  
Steve Dixon  
Pat Goguen  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

### Evangelists:

Kyle Pope  
Jason Garcia



## Is Religion Bad?

By Jason Garcia

James tells us of a “**religion that is pure and undefiled in the sight of our God and Father**” (Jas. 1:27 NASB). Yet, so many of our friends insist that religion—in and of itself—is inherently wrong. They associate it with such things as human tradition, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness—all of which the Scripture condemns. However, given what James teaches us, we can be certain that *religion* is not the problem; rather it is corrupt religion and human philosophy masquerading as Truth that is the problem. Unfortunately for many of our friends, they have equated religion with the worst manifestations of it. Others won’t go as far, but nevertheless have come to erroneous conclusions about religion, teaching that that man can do nothing to avail his own salvation. What do the Scriptures teach about God’s religion?

Does such a thing even exist? Does man have to *do* anything to be acceptable to God?

Let's return to James' words and see them in context: **"If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.**



Olsen Park church of Christ

**Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world"** (Jas. 1:26-27). The Spirit, in so few words, reveals a religion that is exercised worthlessly before God, and sets before us one that is pure and undefiled. This religion is inextricably connected to one's actions and, thus, calls us to a standard of conduct that God determined long ago. It is none other than hypocrites who practice the worthless religion in our text—those whose duplicitous speech betray a shallow piety. Jesus condemned the same deceitful behavior in Pharisees time and time again, reserving his strongest rebukes for those practicing a man-made religion. The Lord described them as outwardly righteous, but inwardly full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (cf. Matt. 23:27). However, we should note that the Lord never rebuked the Law which they claimed to follow, but their perversion of it and, in fact, commanded His followers to obey all that was in the Law of Moses (cf. Matt. 23:3, 23-24). He would, however, ultimately bring about the end of that Law and replace it with His own (cf. Rom. 10:4; 1 Cor. 9:20-21). We see then, it is not religion or law the Lord condemns, but pretentious religion in-

fused with man's traditions and hypocrisy. We must, therefore, diligently seek to practice the religion God has revealed to us in His Word—that which is pure and undefiled, rejecting all of man's self-righteousness, will-worship, unlawful traditions, and hypocrisy.

In teaching the pure and undefiled religion of God, James singles out the act of visiting orphans and widows. This does not mean that these two acts are the sum total of service to God, rather they prove that true religion manifests itself in sincere acts of love, not mere lip service (cf. 1 Jn. 3:18). Paul has much to say regarding the proper treatment of widows, and our Lord teaches that our love and mercy must extend to those who cannot afford to offer anything in return for the relief they receive, namely, the destitute and fatherless (1 Tim. 5:1-16; Luke 14:12-14). James finally qualifies true religion as keeping oneself unstained by the world, and in so doing he proves the Christian's responsibility to keep himself or herself pure. To be sure, it is the blood of Christ that makes us blameless before God, but we must see to it that we

walk blamelessly (1 Thess. 5:22; Heb. 3:12-13; Rom. 2:5-7). He Himself prayed that we would be kept from the evil one (cf. Jn. 17:15), and we must ever be wary of allowing the world to influence us lest we find ourselves stained by its values and ideals (Jas. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Many sincere, well-meaning people believe that Jesus' sacrifice precludes man from doing *anything* to affect his own salvation. However, such teaching is nowhere to be found in Scripture. What we find is a God who calls His disciples to *do all* that He has commanded