

“Vain Religion”
James 1:26

Introduction: James confronts us with:

1. The Test James 1:26- *“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue...”*
2. The Truth James 1:26- *“...but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.”*

Body: Let us examine in detail vain religion.

- I. The Display of Vain Religion James 1:26- *“If any man among you seem to be religious...”*
 - A. By his preaching, praying, fasting, hearing, public worship, church attendance, almsgiving, and other external duties of religion, he is constant in the observance of; and who, upon the account of these things, thinks himself to be a religious man, or is thought to be so by others.
 - B. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless.
 - C. The word for “seem” means to be of the opinion. Keep in mind that this is the view that he has of himself.
 - D. Jesus did not come to offer religion, but redemption. Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship.
 - E. A person can be religious and miss the whole point of Christianity altogether!

- II. The Distinction of Vain Religion James 1:26- *“...and bridleth not his tongue...”*
 - A. Why cannot your religion control your tongue? For religion is designed to bring the whole man under control, and to subdue every faculty of the body and mind to its demands. If the tongue is not restrained, or if there is any unsubdued propensity to sin whatever, it proves that there is no true religion.
 - B. According to James, the test of true religion lay in a person’s ability to control his tongue.
 - C. The picture is that of a man putting the bridle in his own mouth, not in that of another.
 - D. Discretion in speech is better than fluency of speech. James 3:2-3, 1:19
 - E. What is an unbridled tongue? It means that one boasts of his works, and speaks ill of his brethren; backbites them, and hurts their names and characters, by private insinuations, and public charges without any foundation; who takes no care of what he says, but gives his tongue a liberty of speaking anything, to the injury of others, and the dishonour of God, and his ways.
 - F. This is a loose way of talking what he pleases.
 - G. Psalm 39:1- *“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”*
 - H. Psalm 34:13- *“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”*
 - I. Psalm 141:3- *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”*
 - J. Proverbs 10:19, 13:3, 15:2, Eph. 4:29, Col. 4:6, I Peter 3:10

- K. One has to overcome the wild nature of the horse. As goes the mouth, so goes the body.
 - L. The bit must overcome contrary forces. The bit must overcome the wild nature of the horse. The human tongue also must overcome contrary forces. We have an old nature that wants to control us and make us sin. There are circumstances around us that would make us say things we ought not to say. Sin on the inside and pressures on the outside are seeking to get control of the tongue.
 - M. There is a:
 1. Boasting Tongue James 4:16- *“But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.”* (“boastings”- empty, braggart talk)
 2. Backbiting Tongue Proverbs 25:23- *“The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.”* (“backbiting”- The act of slandering the absent)
 3. Blaspheming Tongue I Timothy 1:20- *“Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”* (“blaspheme”- To speak evil of; to utter abuse or slander against; to speak reproachfully of)
 4. Proverbs 22:10, Romans 16:17-18, II Thessalonians 3:14, I Cor. 5:11-13
- III. The Deception of Vain Religion James 1:26- *“...but deceiveth his own heart...”*
- A. This source of self-deception is in saying and doing. (RWP)
 - B. He plays a trick on himself.
 - C. He deceives his own heart with his show of religion, and external performances; on which he builds his hopes of salvation.
 - D. Proverbs 23:7- *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.”*
 - E. Matthew 12:34- *“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*
 - F. It is the tongue that reveals the heart, if the heart is right, the speech will be right.
- IV. The Destitution of Vain Religion James 1:26- *“...this man's religion is vain.”*
- A. It is useless, and unprofitable to himself and others.
 - B. All his preaching, praying, hearing, and attendance on the ordinances will be of no avail to him; and he, by his evil tongue, brings a scandal and reproach upon the ways of God, and doctrines of Christ.
 - C. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is any one thing in reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless.
 - D. Galatians 6:3- *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”*
 - E. Actions speaks louder than words.

Conclusion: Merely listening to God's Word leads to dead religious activity and deception. (James 1:25) But you say, "Preacher, you are jumping to conclusions." We find in the Bible that there are people sincerely saying, but their actions speak louder than words. It does not matter what you say! I John 1:6, 8, 10