

WHEN RELIGION BECOMES VAIN

James 1:26, 27

by Walton Weaver

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The Christian religion is that system of divine truth, worship, and piety presented in the New Testament.
 - 1. One may be religious without being a Christian, Matt. 15:8-9; Gal. 1:13-14; Acts. 26:5.
 - 2. Vain religion is a religion "having no real substance, value, or importance; it is empty, void, worthless, useless. "
 - 3. Vain religion is indeed a religion of show, sham and mere pretense.
- B. When is our religion vain? This is a vital question to everyone who desires to be religious, pious, holy.
 - 1. It would be terrible in the end if our religion turned out to be vain.
 - 2. It is greatly to be feared that much so-called religion is mere show, sham, more pretension.
- C. To overcome the temptation to make a show or display in religion, the Christian must continually ask himself the question:
 - 1. Is my religion real or genuine, or is my religion vain?
 - 2. Hence the importance of the subject, "When is our religion vain?"

I. OUR RELIGION IS VAIN IF WE DO NOT BRIDLE OUR TONGUE.

- A. We deceive ourselves if we pretend to be religious and do not bridle our tongue, James 1:26
 - 1. We put a bridle on the horse to hold the horse, to control the horse, to cause the horse to obey us.
 - 2. To bridle the tongue means to hold it, control it, that it may obey our better judgment.
- B. The tongue can be a most powerful and useful member of our body. With the tongue we can bless and praise God, say words of love, tenderness, comfort; tell story of the Cross, move and sway hearts of people as never before.
- C. The tongue can be an evil member of our body, James 3:6-8. What a world of iniquity is often stirred up by an ungodly tongue,
- D. The tongue can devise much mischief, Ps. 52:2-4
 - 1. Much of the mischief and wickedness in the family, the community, church, etc, devised by an unholy tongue.
 - 2. Like a sharp razor working deceitfully, causes strife, hate, false doctrine—ugly, abusive language...
- E. The tongue can bring much trouble upon us, Prov. 2:23; 18:7, 8

II. OUR RELIGION IS VAIN WHEN WE DO NOT PRACTICE WHAT WE PROFESS.

“Seems to be religious,” or “thinks he is religious” (NKJV) — makes a great profession of being religious.

- A. We profess much (as members of the church of Christ) in respect to religion.
 - 1. We claim to advocate the truth, the whole truth, but with very little practice in comparison to our profession.
 - 2. Our religion is vain, void, and worthless unless the practice goes along with the profession.
 - 3. We profess great faith in the all sufficiency of the Bible, yet, we are often discouraged and our zeal slackens in the good work. Some move into fields where the church is not known or is small and loose zeal, quirt or compromise with denomination, when, if they only practiced what they profess, congregations would spring up in many places of the world.
- B. I fear we are sometimes like the ancient Pharisee ... Jesus said of them—Matt. 23:2-3.
- C. We profess to believe the following: (but what about our practice?)
 - 1. 2 Tim. 2:15 (do we study?)
 - 2. Heb. 5:12; 2Tim. 2:2, 24; Mat. 28:19-20 (do we teach?)
 - 3. James 1:26, 27; Matt. 25:31-46 (do we visit?)
 - 4. Heb. 10: 24-25; (do we forsake the assembly? do we provoke to love?)
 - 5. 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2Cor. 9:7 (do we plan to give as prospered?)
 - 6. Eph. 4:13-32; Mat. 6:14-15 (do we forgive and put away bitterness? If not our religion is vain.)
 - 7. Col 3:9 (do we lie one to another?)
 - 8. Matt. 6:33 (doe we seek first God’s kingdom?)
 - 9. 1 Cor. 15:58; Tit. 3:1 (are we abounding in the work of the Lord ready unto every good work?)
 - 10. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5 :19-21. When we do not practice what we profess to believe about the above Scriptures, our religion is VAIN and WORTHLESS.

III. OUR RELIGION IS VAIN IF IT DOES NOT COME FROM THE HEART.

Mere profession is not religion that comes from the heart.

- A. As is the heart, so is the life, Mat. 12:33-35
- B. We must put our heart into all we say and do for the Lord. Into our faith, Rom. 10:9,10 2. Into our obedience, Rom. 6:16-18 3. Into our public worship—the songs, prayers, and the Lord's Supper, etc. Matt. 15:8-9
- C. As we put our hearts into our worship, it becomes a matter of joy and pleasure. The reason some do not enjoy coming to the PUBLIC WORSHIP and getting good from it is because they PUT NOTHING into it.

IV. OUR RELIGION IS VAIN WHEN IT DOES NOT MAKE US BETTER.

Give us compassionate hearts (to care for widows and orphans) and keep us separate from the world

- A. If our religion does not make us better, what does it amount to anyway? Are we benefitted at all? It should cause us to act more and more in harmony with the golden rule, Matt. 7:12
- B. It should make us better citizen and lead us to make all the proper efforts to promote and maintain civic righteousness in every community.
 - 1. If not, what does it amount to? Is it not vain?
 - 2. If a Christian, we should show what Christian citizenship means. We cannot show what Christian citizenship is by shunning and avoiding people, but by contacting them.
- C. If our religion does not make us better husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, better employers and employees, it is VAIN.

V. OUR RELIGION IS VAIN IF WE TEACH FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. Matt. 15:8,9.

- A. If we teach it is not necessary to observe the Lord's Supper each week, Acts 20:7
 - 1. Or that it is not necessary to be baptized to be saved, Mark 16:16.
 - 2. etc.