

STAINED BY THE WORLD

“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.” James 1:27

Before you venture into this short message, please consider the Words of God, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:9)*. The ways of God are often so contrary to the way we as humans, or our society thinks, that we must be careful to not quickly reject something without even really examining it according to His Word. I’m confident that for each one who reads this with an open heart, He will reveal His will in a greater way, and grant us to be able to see more thru His Eyes.

Many of us are familiar with the Verse from James, telling us what is *“pure and undefiled religion”* to our Father. We often separate His answer into 2 parts: 1. helping the helpless, and 2. keeping ourselves unstained by the world (personal purity). But we need to understand that there is a vital connection between these 2 statements! If the way we think and the way we live is “stained by the world”, the reality is that we probably will not have God’s Heart of love toward a pitifully suffering world. Think about this: of ALL the many things that the Lord could have said in answer to the question, “What is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God?”, He answers with these 2 statements: 1. *“to visit the orphans and widows in their distress”* and 2. *“to keep oneself unstained by the world.”* If these 2 things have such high priority to our God, then shouldn’t it have a high priority to His people?! We cry, we sing, we SAY that we want to be like Jesus, yet when He plainly tells us what His Heart and character is like, what His priorities are, we turn our head the other way. Father, help us to truly want to be like You.

According to the 2004 Children on the Brink Joint Report of UNAIDS, USAID and UNICEF there are an estimated 143 million orphans (one or both parents dying) in the poorest regions of the world, 64 million of them 11 years or younger. There are no reliable estimates for the number of desperate widows (even Christian widows) in the world. They truly are among the most forgotten and rejected human beings on the earth. But our Heavenly Father hasn’t forgotten them! Ps. 9:18 says, *“For the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.”* In the Old Testament laws, He made provision for them, and even gave strict warnings and judgments to His people who would not care for the orphan and widow. Has He changed? According to James 1:27, His Heart is very tender toward the helpless, those who not only need food in their belly, but are the most vulnerable to the abuses of evil people.

Is it pleasing in His sight when we hear testimony after testimony in our churches of how God has “blessed” us, helping us to get the loan for our expensive house, our expensive vehicles, to get a discounted price for all the STUFF that we really don’t need, opened the door so we can take a cruise, etc, etc. Is this really God’s Heart, to “bless” us with more and more stuff, while so much of the world is lost without Jesus, so many millions of orphans and widows (many of these women our own sisters in the Lord), so many of our own brothers and sisters in Christ struggling to survive and do the ministry worldwide?

Some will say, “We can’t help all the suffering of this world.” That is true, but do we really care?? Are we using our means to help SOME of the suffering of this world? Would we even dream of sacrificing some of our comforts and pleasures for the sake of those who need food on their plate, clothes on their

back, a roof over their head, deliverance from oppression, to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ? Is our Father really so concerned about giving us more comfort and goods when so many of our own spiritual family (His children) are suffering? *“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1Jn. 3:17)*. If we knew someone in our natural family was suffering, was an orphan, widow or in a helpless condition, would we care or be willing to sacrifice? Most would. Perhaps one problem is that we don’t recognize the value of the Body of Christ, especially His people in other lands, or understand that they are also part of our family. Another comment: “We need to help the poor here in the USA before helping people in other countries.” In a comprehensive survey on church giving, the book entitled ‘The State of Church Giving Through 2003’ said that a 2003 survey of 28 denominations’ missions income showed that less than 2% of church giving went toward overseas missions. There is definitely not a problem with too much concern or spending for the hurting people outside of the US (USA has under 5% of the world’s population)!!

Romans 12:2 says, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* Sadly enough, in some areas of our lives we may not see, understand or be willing to accept that which is the *“good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* until we are standing before Him! We may disagree about many things, but on that Day we will be forced to see some things that we are not willing to see now, the Day when He will *“disclose the motives of men’s hearts” (1Cor. 4:5)*. Please don’t be offended. Pray and meditate on these things. When our works, words and motives are placed in the fire of His Judgment, will we be shocked to see how much of it is only *“wood, hay and stubble”* with no lasting value (read 1Cor. 3:12-13)? Only then will many of us be FORCED to recognize how vain and temporal this world really is, how foolish we’ve been, how much time, money, and opportunity we’ve wasted, and how utterly selfish we really were during our time here on this earth! Better to let Him show us our heart now, than be forced to see it later! On that Day we will be made to see how little we really care, almost continually putting our own desires and comforts ahead of the Heart and desire of Jesus, Who wants to live through us to touch multitudes.

We quote Scriptures, trying to prove that He wants His children to be wealthy, comfortable and have lots of fun here on this earth. But is that really the Heart of our Father, the Heart of Jesus, Who *“though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2Cor. 8:9)?* When Paul (who at times was hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed and homeless for the sake of the Gospel—1Cor. 4:11) wrote this, was he teaching us about the Lord’s desire for His people to be materially rich, or was he urging the church at Corinth, who had more wealth than many of the other churches, to follow in the example of Christ?! Please read 2Corinthians 8 and 9 in context, and it should be clear that the Lord is teaching us in this passage to be givers, NOT for the sake of getting a return, but from the love of Jesus. Friends, those still pursuing the “American dream” need to realize that this elusive paradise CANNOT be reached here on earth. You cannot have a big enough house, a nice enough car or enough money in the bank to meet the needs of your soul. Only *“HE satisfies the longing soul” (Ps. 107:9)*. Faith, love and doing His will brings peace to the soul. Finally, *“Remember the Words of the Lord Jesus...It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35*