

A religion that God accepts by Willem Hekman

Here in Indonesia where we live and work, religion is an important part of society. Even in the political world religion plays an important part. All government people from the president down, use religious terms in their speeches. At the beginning and close of their political speeches they use salutations in Arabic and invoke the blessings and guidance of Allah. All parliament sessions open with prayers in Arabic and Indonesian. We often hear that all religions are good and have the same goals and purpose.

From a close examination of the Word of God it appears there are some religions that God does not accept because in James chapter 1 verse 26 there is special mention of a religion accepted by God. We want to examine the Word of God and find out what kind of religion God accepts.

“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 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 is even mention here of a worthless religion! In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 7 Verse 21 there is also strong language from the Lord Jesus Christ that not all people who pray to the Lord are going to enter heaven, but only those who do the will of God the Father. There are even very religious people who prophecy in the name of Jesus, drive out demons in the name of Jesus and perform many miracles, all in the name of Jesus, and still are not received into heaven!

According to James chapter 1 verse 26 and 27 there are 3 characteristics of a worthwhile religion accepted by God the Father.

- 1. Controlling one’s tongue.**
- 2. Looking after orphans and widows.**
- 3. Keeping oneself from being polluted by the world.**

Controlling our tongue.

In James chapter 1 verses 22-25 we see the Christian’s obligation to learn and do the whole will of God. Now we have a particular application. To be religious means controlling our tongue. We must keep a tight rein on our tongue. This matter of controlled speech was already introduced in verse 19, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”. This matter of controlling our tongue is further explained in James chapter 3 verse 3 – 12:

“When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they

are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water."

This exhortation from God's Word is so descriptive and straight to the point. There is really nothing I need to add. Our tongue can be like a fire bringing destruction and disaster, boasting, evil and full of deadly poison, always complaining, criticizing and cursing. Or our tongue can be an instrument to praise God and become a blessing to all those around us. In chapter 3 verse 8 James explains that no man can tame his tongue. Impossible with men but possible with God. With Him nothing is impossible! Each morning we must give the control of our tongue to the Lord Jesus Christ. He can make our language and speech a blessing to God and men!

Looking after orphans and widows.

In Exodus chapter 22 verse 22 the Lord God exhorted His people to never take advantage of widows or orphans. If they didn't take good care of the widows and orphans, God's anger would be aroused; they would be killed by the Lord and their wives become widows and their children fatherless! Also in 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 18 the church is exhorted to give proper recognition and care to widows who have no family to care for those really in need.

A couple of days ago my wife and I visited Mrs. Pur whose husband had died the day before. She has 3 young children and earns about 300.000 rupiahs (\$34.00) per month as a cook at the Inalta Bible College, which I started in 1974. First I looked at the body of Margono, her husband and then I looked at Mrs. Pur and her 3 children. The Holy Spirit asked me a question, "what are going to do about this situation?", "Can your church, Calvary Life Fellowship do anything?" The Holy Spirit encouraged me to make available Rp. 850.000 immediately to help her with the funeral costs. So I am passing on this question to you? Can we do anything on a regular basis to help this poor widow? It is certainly God's will to help the widows and orphans. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress".

Keeping oneself from being polluted by the world.

When I look outside my window I can see the pollution of the city of Jakarta hanging in the distance. The pollution seems to be far away but actually the pollution is all around me and even in my house. It is not easy to keep oneself from being polluted from this world. Pollution infiltrates everywhere. It seems that the only way not be affected by this pollution is to be totally separated from the city. I need to drive up to the mountains or take a boat out to thousand islands. In Indonesia we have a culture of corruption, bribing, lying and deception. God has something to say to us as to how to deal with this pollution.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 14 – 18,

“Do not be yoked (joined) together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”.

God tells us in the next verse: “dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reference for God”.

May the Holy Spirit lead and guide us in this matter of separating ourselves from the world’s pollution and purify ourselves from the world’s contamination as we respond to His word and obey God’s Word. God almighty Himself has promised to receive us as His sons and daughters. Praise His mighty Name!