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WEEK FOUR – TRUE RELIGION AND HUMILITY

Reading: James 4:1-17

The source of true religion is the word of God. That definition is the basis of what we, as Christians, call religion. Whilst we can interpret the word of God in slightly different ways from others, we cannot add, or take away from it. It is vital that we understand the importance of God's word. The following are verses just a few of many which teach this important truth:

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Proverbs 30:6 *Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.*

2 Timothy 13:16-17 *All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

Joshua 1:8 *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.*

Isaiah 40:8 *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*

Matthew 24:35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

Revelation 22:19 *"And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

- We need to ask ourselves if we believe God's word.
- If we do, then we cannot pick and choose the parts we like and ignore others. It comes as a whole package.

The language of James is unequivocal: clear and plain. I have commented before that I think James would have made a good Yorkshireman in that he says what he means without any embroidery. In this chapter, he talks about "... *the whole army of evil desires at war within you. You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to*

get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong – you want only what will give you pleasure.”

- What kind of things might we want that we see others have?
- Do we consider our motives when we ask God for something?
- Do we ask for money but think we can fool God as to what we will spend it on?

1 Samuel 16:7

“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

We are so quick to judge on appearances, instead of giving time to find out what is the truth. Here, Samuel had come to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the future king of Israel. As each one came before him, he was impressed by how they looked until David stood before him. He was only a young lad who looked after the sheep and didn't have any of the experience of his older brothers. This scripture implies that Samuel would have rejected him because he was looking for the wrong things.

The term 'adulterers' that James uses in verse 4 is a metaphorical, not a literal, term. In the Old Testament those who broke their vows to love and serve God, and instead followed idols, were called adulterers. They had an illicit affair with the things of the world resulting in estrangement and hostility with God.

- Have we ever thought of ourselves in these terms?
- What does it teach us about God?

In the NKJ version, verse 6 reads: *But He gives more grace. Therefore, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

There is an old hymn that says: *“His love has no limit, His grace has no measure, His pow'r has no boundary known unto men; For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

God's grace is his unmerited favour. We don't deserve it, we can't earn it, but he gives it just the same.

So then, what about humility. We need to understand what the word means. It does NOT mean the Uriah Heep sort of humility. His character is notable for 'his cloying humility, unctuousness, obsequiousness, and insincerity, making frequent references to his own "umbleness"'.

“**Humility means** “the state of being **humble.**” Both it and **humble** have their origin in the Latin word humilis, **meaning** “low.” ... When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with **humility** comes wisdom. — Proverbs 11:2” This has come into our language as *pride comes before a fall.*

Verse 10 (in the NLT) says: “*When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honour.*”

This is true humility, admitting our complete dependence on God.

Read verses 11-17

- What do these verses teach us about criticism?
- What do they have to say about presumption?
- Do we need to take particular notice of verse 17?

We need to take the example of humility from Jesus who at the last supper took a towel and washed the feet of his disciples. That was usually the job of the lowliest servant!

Prayer:

Father God, may we hide your word in our hearts that we may not sin against you. Thank you for your infinite grace and mercy that has made us your children.

*And whoever exalts
himself will be
humbled, and he who
humbles himself will
be exalted.*

Matthew 23:12 NKJ