

Text: James 1:27b.

Theme: Authentic religion

My purpose for this message: To help people understand that true Christians guard against the world's pollution.

Delivered: Oct. 2, 2005 @ KEFC

## True Religion (2)

### PRAY.

Before hurricane Rita hit, workers were pumping 2 million gallons of water a minute out of New Orleans and back into Lake Pontchartrain. And it's bad water; contaminated with raw sewage, household chemicals, oil products like gasoline, pesticides, acid from car batteries, industrial solvents, and household paints.

This polluted water is depleting oxygen supplies in the lake and will do so as it makes its way to the Gulf too; fish and wildlife will be harmed for months—perhaps years to come. Officials also say due to pollution some parts of the city may not have clean drinking water for years to come.

Spiritual pollution is even more deadly than these contaminants and *God* has been warning his people of that for long time. He pointed to the forbidden fruit and told Adam and Eve *...when you eat of it, you will surely die.* (Gen.2:17) He was furious in Noah's day? *The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become...and said, I am going to put an end to all people...* (Gen.6:5-7) He warned Moses, Solomon, Israel. And warns us Americans in 2005, don't let the world's garbage pollute you. READ Jas.1:27 (today, on 27b).

### 1. Threat of Pollution comes from...

...by the world. On the one hand, God *likes* the world (κοσμος). He cares about its people. *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him might have eternal life.* Jn.3:16

On the other hand, God *hates* the world (κοσμος). While he loves its people He hates their philosophies and practices. And as such, we—His children—are to keep our distance. *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* I Jn.2:15. Understand that the world is not simply a collection of mischievous people who perform amusing antics, but a dark foreboding military force locked in combat with God and His people. READ 1 Jn.5:19. So, when I invite the world's pollution into my life, I am actually handcrafting grenades for my enemy to use against God; I become my enemy's weapon.

"So, keep your distance," God says. Not so much *physically* (Jn.17:15). But spiritually; guard your heart so that the world's pollution will not contaminate you. *Keep onese!*... James says. It's not automatic, put your shoulder into it.

### 2. Threat of Pollution looks like...

What pollutes—not our water but our hearts, mind and bodies? Suggest 4:

#### 1. Sex Pollution.

READ 1 Thess.4:3-5. Remember, we're talking about evidence of real religion. Uncontrolled lust is the mark of pagans, unbelievers not Christians. Yet even if we are sexually pure in our bodies, isn't it easy to chuckle at the sexual innuendo or worse, in the *Friends* dialogue? For the moment, we forget it's the most destructive kind of sin. READ 1 Cor.6:18. God's not opposed to sex; he created your body so you *could* have sex, and enjoy it so much. But for the benefit of children, true intimacy, disease prevention and God knows what else, He's limited it *just* to a married woman and her husband. But the world and its Eve mindset assumes God's

keeping good things from them and indulges in premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, pornography and beyond.

Which migrates to the church, pollutes it; engaged couples having foreplay and more. We have had people leave this church because we pressed them to repent of adultery. I would assume there are those of you who struggle with homosexual temptations. And of course, pornography is epidemic in churches. 65% of all men look at internet porn more than once a week and Christian statistics are supposedly the same. And the stats for women are rising.

Listen to God, Eph.5:3: Among you, there should not even be a *...hint of sexual immorality... because these are improper for God's holy people.*

So James says, *keep yourself...*, from the world's sexual pollution.

## 2. Possession Pollution

Last year's average household median income was just over \$44,000. American family of 4 is considered poor if their income is under \$19,300. Yet many people around the world live on \$400- \$2000 a year. Our frame rancher is modest compared to many houses being built in Lancaster County, but enormous compared to someone living in the Philippine hills or Nairobi's streets.

Most purchases are morally neutral." But if we have to live in debt, (avg. household credit card debt is now \$8000), or cut back what God wants us to give, we've got possession pollution.

Maybe the amount of time we devote to buying, using and maintaining our possessions crowds out ministry; possession pollution. How do things become so appealing, so important? Jealousy of a friend's purchase? Or assuming what the average TV family has we're entitled to. Instead of just needing *transportation*, now I need a certain *kind*. While my old TV works just fine, it isn't flat panel, or high def, or plasma. *Others* have a fast internet hookup, why shouldn't I? Shop at garage sales? No way! Assumptions, justifications, rationalizations, and a host of other ways of thinking replace, "God, what is your will?"

Which is the question the rich ruler refused to consider when Jesus urged him to, "Go, sell all your possessions, give the money to the poor, *then* come follow me.

## 3. Truth Pollution

In his book *No Place for Truth*, David Wells complained that pastors have given up being ministers of the Word to become therapists and managers of small enterprises called churches. But pastors who downplay the Word fit well into the spirit of the age: We're not really confident in the truth of anything. "That's just your interpretation," or "Well, that may be true for you, but I feel..."

Who could forget President Clinton's immortal verbal dodge about his sexual conduct, "What is, is?" Gene Edward Veith suggested the president's defense was the unmasking of how uncomfortable postmodern people are about truth.

- "I did wrong, but it doesn't matter because it was private."
- "I accept full responsibility, but I'm a victim of my accuser."
- "My account, while legally accurate, was not forthcoming."

Postmodern thinking makes words squishy, not having objective definitions that everyone agrees to. Humpty Dumpty told Alice in Wonderland, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it mean, neither more or less."

It's true that the word of God contains some unclear things. But "stop committing adultery" is not one of them. "Stop lying" is not one of them. "Help the poor, the widows and orphans" is not one of them. It's not unclear when God

says “Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you.” Or when Jesus says, “No one—NO ONE—comes to the Father EXCEPT through me.”

#### 4. Faith Pollution

I don't mean faith in Jesus to save us from our sins by his blood. Often God refers to faith as trusting Him for *every* provision, and *in* every situation. For example, 23 times in Hebrews 11 it says things like this were done *by faith*:

- By faith Noah built an ark though he'd never seen rain
- By faith Abram packed up his home and family to move to a country God didn't initially identify
- By faith Abram and his wife had a child when he was 100 and she was 90.
- By faith Moses' parents hid him from Pharaoh's child murderers and *by faith*, were not afraid.
- By faith, we bank on God for guidance, for clothing, for shelter, for love, for justice, for life itself, for healing, for friendship, you name it.

Your nonChristian relative relies on his salary, insurance, the doctor and the hospital, seat belts, the government, the courts, parental training, medicine, counseling, friends... Many of those things good, most are smart. But faith pollution takes a kernel of wisdom like “it's good to have insurance” or “good to use the courts,” and converts good things into omnipotent gods. In such things we misplace our faith.

*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

(Heb.11:1) Not certain of the paycheck we *do* see, not certain of the attorney or judge that we *do* see, not certain of the seat belt, the friend, or anything else that we can see, hear, taste, smell or touch, but certain of Him whom we do not see. Here's how you can tell where your faith is. How do you respond when a friend lets you down, when your paycheck doesn't stretch, when the medical news is bad and nothing can be done, when someone or something, failed you? Rage, bitterness, lawsuits, depression, revenge..., or an understandable disappointment—that's RULED by a peace that passes all understanding? Faith pollution.

#### Concl:

In 1892, businessman William Love decided to dig a short canal from the upper and lower Niagra Rivers in New York, to power a new community he wanted to build on the eastern edge of the city of Niagra Falls. His plans fell through and only a mile of the canal was dug. In the 1920's it became a municipal and industrial dump. In 1952 the chemical company that owned it filled it with dirt and sold it to the city for \$1. Homes and a school were eventually built on the site but by 1978 there were huge problems. Drums of chemicals had rusted out and chemicals were working their way to the ground surface, killing trees, gardens and plants, and polluting swimming pools. Odd smells and puddles accumulated in basements while cancer rates and birth defects were unusually high.

In the end, the federal government declared the area an environmental disaster area and relocated over 800 families.

Pollution kills, and it's harder to get it out than keep it out. Rom.12:2 say *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* How? BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY. But ultimately the battle against the world's pollution is won or lost in the mind, the heart. And *this* [Bible] is what renews your mind. Read it every day; fill your mind with this antidote to the world.