

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Religion is Personal

(Jerry Fite)

**W**e occasionally interact with people who say they do not discuss religion or politics.

Why? The underlying reason may be that politics and religion are often controversial. Most feel uncomfortable in such settings. The reason often expressed is that one's politics and religion are personal.

Leaving politics aside, one's spiritual or religious belief is not so personal that one cannot ask a question concerning your belief. Peter exhorts Christians to be *“ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15). Ask a Christian about the anchor of the soul, and he or she is not only prepared to answer, but does so willingly.

While the Christian does not shrink from communicating his or her religious beliefs, it is true that religion is personal.

James writes, *“If any may thinketh himself to be religious while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's reli-*

*gious is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world* (James 1:26-27). Notice that religion here is not reflecting on the differences between Christianity and Judaism, or why someone is Protestant instead of Catholic. Religion approved of God is manifested by bridling the tongue, seeing to the needs of the helpless, and remaining pure before God.

Every one of these manifestations of religion focuses upon personal responsibility. I may do many good things religiously, but if “I” do not “bridle my tongue” I deceive myself and my religion is vain. I need to pull on the reins of my tongue and be *“slow to speak,”* especially when provoked (James 1:19). I need to direct my tongue in the direction of edifying others with pure or uncorrupt speech (Ephesians 4:29).

Religion receiving God's approval involves a Christian *“visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction”*. When made

aware of a child or a widow where the death of parents or a spouse has left both without help or comfort, I can see their affliction and need to step in and fill a gap. The word “visit” means to inspect or look into what is needed and then act accordingly. The Greek word translated “visit” comes from “episkepeo” indicating “oversight.” If able, I should be willing to step in and help eliminate the affliction arising from one being left alone, having no one to see to his or her needs.

Pure and undefiled religion is the only religion worth professing. I have the personal responsibility to “keep myself unspotted from the world”. The Christian is not to avoid conversing with the world, or living life in their presence. But one must not participate in sin or be tainted with the world's thinking of fulfilling the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). Building myself up in my most holy faith is a good way to avoid the blemish of sin (Jude 20). Religion is personal, but not like and in the way many view it.