

Pure and Undefiled Religion



Fierce Times Are Coming (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

In Matthew 24 Jesus lists a whole series of things that are going to happen, mostly unpleasant. Let's look at that for a moment. He talks about the beginning of birth pangs, the birth of God's kingdom. He says in verse 9,

> "'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.' [That's part of what lies ahead.] 'And then many [believers] will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many [Christians] will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.'"

Now the natural response will be, "Well, Lord, show me where to hide. I want to get away. I want to be in a secure place. But the amazing thing is, Jesus then goes on to say,

> "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come."

When? In the midst of all the disasters. When the pressures are greatest, when the opposition is the strongest, God's people are going to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all nations in all the world. See, it's going to take a different kind of person from what many of us are used to thinking. The end time is going to bring out a new kind of person. Not new in the sense that they've never been there, because they have been there all through history. But it's going to bring out a new surge of men and women, and mainly young people, who are totally sold out to Jesus. They will have no other aim or ambition. God is looking for fanatics of the right kind. Somebody defined a fanatic as somebody who loves Jesus more than you do.

Then Matthew 5:16 Jesus speaks to His disciples and says,

> "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

So your light shines through your good works, through the things you do. Not through the things you say, or the sermons we preach, but through the things we do. I want to plead for one particular type of good work. In James 1:27, one of the most neglected verses in the New Testament, James says,

> "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit [or care for] orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

What is the first demonstration of pure religion? To care for orphans and widows. How many contemporary Christians pay any attention whatever to that verse?

I've been reading recently in the prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and I have been impressed again and again with God's concern for the fatherless. When He lists the sins of His people, He lists idolatry, and adultery, and not caring for the fatherless. In other words, in God's standards not caring for the fatherless is the same category as idolatry and adultery. When James put this verse in the New Testament he was simply carrying over the whole teaching of the Old Testament.

> "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

Have you ever considered your responsibility to do something about fatherless children? I want to suggest to Christians in America that we need to be far more earnest about caring for the fatherless, than has ever entered our religious heads up to this time. I used to say if every Christian family in the United States would adopt one fatherless child, think of the oceans of suffering that people would be spared. Now I know today because of abortion it's not altogether easy any longer to adopt children. Although, handicapped children or mixed race children are probably available. Well, they're still children, you know that? And God still loves them. Are we going to do anything about all that? Are you going to do anything? Are you going to teach your children or your congregation to do something? Remember that's the first mark of pure religion is to care for the fatherless. It hasn't dropped out of the Bible. It may have dropped out of religious thinking, but it has not dropped out of the Bible. It's still there.

Then it says, "...keep oneself unspotted from the world." It's funny how religious people, myself included, always find it easier to focus on the negative. "Well, Lord, I will keep myself unspotted from the world. I won't go to these movies and I won't read these magazines, etc." But what about the positive? What are you doing?

I read a terrible statistic. I can't quote it. I'm not good at quoting statistics, but it compared the amount of money that American people spend on pet foods with the amount that's given to foreign missions. The pet foods were in a totally different level from the money given to foreign missions. Is that a picture of America's values? I want to say I love pets. I'm a dog lover. If our lifestyle permitted it, Ruth and I would own a dog. But it wouldn't be fair because we move about so much. But I beseech you, please, don't pour out on a pet the love that a child needs. Do you hear me? Pets are an extension of our ego in a way. They are there when we want to play with them and they don't get too much in the way, and you have to take them for a little exercise. But really they fit in with our convenience.

There are two big idols in this nation. Shall I tell you their names? Comfort and convenience. If you want to follow the Lord, you've got to smash those two idols. The things that God will ask you to do will not fit in with your comfort and not fit in with your convenience.

Well I'm sure you're thinking, "Why does God tolerate all this evil? Why does He let it all go on? Why do we have to sit and endure and see all this evil? What is God working for? What is His aim? What is His purpose? His own special people. He'll go on, and on, and on until He's got that people. All the purposes of history are bent to the accomplishment of God's purpose, His own special people, zealous for good works. That's the reason of history, it's that Jesus Christ will have for Himself His own special people.

Let me give you a word of console as I close, 1 John 2:17,

> "And the world is passing away, and its lust; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

So in the midst of a totally changing, unstable, evil, culture, society, it's all passing away. But one thing will remain. The will of God and the person who has dedicated himself to do the will of God. "He who does the will of God abides forever." Amen.

I would like to suggest that we pray for a moment. Wherever you are just turn yourself to the Lord for a moment. If, as you have listened to me, the Holy Spirit has been dealing with you, you've had to acknowledge "God, I'm sorry but I am a

self-centered person. My life begins and ends with myself. And I'm tired of it, God. It hasn't made me happy. It hasn't fulfilled me, but I want to change. I want You to change me. I want You to deal with my selfishness. Release me from it. Help me to take up my cross and follow you." If you want to make that your prayer here this evening, would you just raise your hand wherever you are?

Father, you see the raised hands. You see the hearts from which they come. Will You move in those lives in your sovereign grace and mercy, and will you give them the grace and the courage and the faith to deny themselves, take up their cross and really follow Jesus. For His name's sake we pray, Amen.

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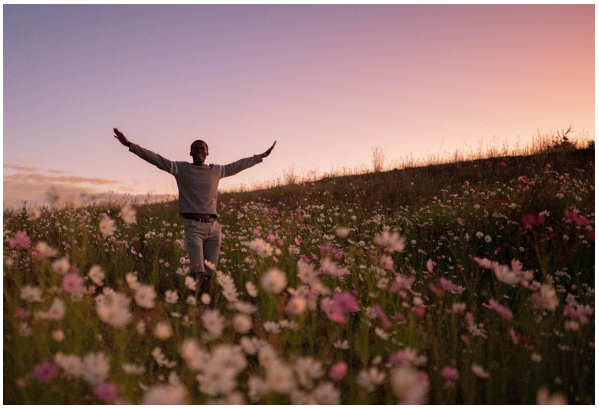

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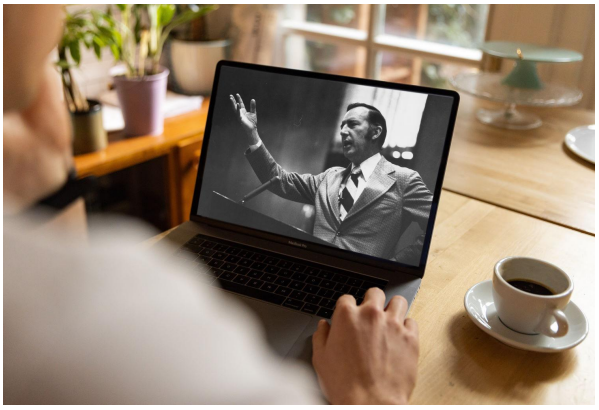

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