

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
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Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
6:30 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofchrist.com)

This Past Week:
Worship—27
Wednesday—13

For meditation:
Ecclesiastes 9.13–14
Abilities and skill don't
guarantee success.
Wisdom doesn't guar-
antee appreciation.
People who ought to
appreciate and thank
us often have enough
selfishness to where
they forget us quickly.

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

Pure religion, 1

James 1.27 clarifies what constitutes real religion—religion that pleases God.

The Gr. word translated *religion*, according to Strong's, originally referred to the fear or reverence of the gods. In time, it came to mean the rituals of public worship. In Acts 26.5, the word describes the religious chores of Pharisaism; in Colossians 2.18, it indicates the *worship* of angels. In current English, to say a person is "religious" usually means there is an inner, spiritual dimension of faith beyond mere outward worship, and this is more in line with what James says.

Judaism was steeped in ritual. Prayers were said every day at regular times; lambs were offered morning and evening; other sacrifices expressing thankfulness were duly made; and great religious feasts were held three times each year. Even after becoming a Christian, many Jews continued to observe these rites.

But James doesn't mention these in his comments about true religion. Agreeing with Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, he says real religion lies in character, not in forms of worship (2 Tim. 3.5). We cannot tell a man's religion merely by seeing him in church, or by his knowledge, or depth of his feeling. True religion occurs in the compassion shown and holiness pursued in the ebb and flow of life. It is in ordinary living, not just public ritual, that God judges us.

James 1.27 isn't an exhaustive definition of Christianity. Rather, it shows—in a grand and radiant way—that Christianity is love, love for the vulnerable, love that acts, love that is compassionate, love that is clean and unspotted from the world (1 Jn. 5.18).

more to come.

kenny

Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

There's an ancient legend in which Death and a man reach an agreement. Death pledges not to come upon the man suddenly; it would give the man forewarnings before the final assault by the king of terrors.

One day, to the man's surprise, he was confronted by Death, and he protested that no warning had been given! No notice had been sent!

"No warning given?" said Death. "Your hair is gray, your eyes are dim, you are missing teeth, and your gait is faltering. Did you not realize that these are my heralds?"

(to be read in conjunction with the article, "A great text from Hosea")

Sermon: Matthew 5.4

The unregrettable regret

29 March 2026

A great text from Hosea

Gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it.

Hosea 7.9

In his comments on this verse, G. Campbell Morgan wrote that what's asserted is contrary to nature. In *Hosea, the Heart and Holiness of God* (71), he pointed out that people generally notice gray hairs as soon as they appear. They may smile at them, pluck them, or dye them, but they know they're there.

Hosea told Israel the nation had swerved from its destiny. Meant to shine as a light in the world, Israel had mingled with the pagans, learned their depravities, and worshipped their idols—compromising themselves to where they lost their moral strength. “Israel has gray hairs, and they don't know it,” proclaimed the prophet. It's a memorable figure of speech describing spiritual decay.

Early detection. “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered (7.1). We're bombarded with medical admonitions to detect early signs of disease, because if caught early, many conditions can be treated. Early on, God diagnosed Israel's problem, but Israel ignored the diagnosis, and the problem worsened to where it was incurable (2 Chron. 36.16).

Oblivious to the obvious. “Now their own deeds have surrounded them” (7.2). When we're inattentive and finally wake up to reality, we can find ourself in a strange place and wonder, “How did I get here?” The answer, often, is that we got here due to a dull heart, unseeing eyes, and unhearing ears—we were inattentive, uninterested, and unconcerned in what was happening around us and to us (Matt. 13.15).

Half-baked. “Ephraim is a cake unturned” (7.8). A failure to judge and discipline ourself doesn't lead to greater growth and stability, but it can cause our lusts and desires to overheat, worsen, and enflame us emotionally (7.4–7), leaving us like a cake that's cooked on the outside but raw on the inside, that makes God vomit (Rev. 3.16).

Returning to the figure of the gray hair, let's be careful not to think we're in our prime when all the signs say we're spiritually geriatric, decrepit, and frail (7.10).

It's a terrible thing to wake up some day and realize we're on the brink of eternity, and have nothing to prepare for it.

kenny

Offend in one sin, offend in all?

James 2.10

There are Scriptures that make no sense when interpreted legalistically or logically. Take the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20.1–16). Paying a man who only works one hour the same amount as a man who worked all day seems blatantly unfair. Yet Christ said that's how evil people think. Many believe the elder brother made a good case against his father and prodigal brother (Lk. 15.22–24). And what shepherd would risk his life fighting a lion or bear to protect a sheep or two? Ranchers know that a lion or bear eating one of your lambs is just the price of doing business. Bon appetit.

To repeat, there are things in the Bible that make no sense when viewed from a legal or logical standpoint.

Here's a prime example: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (2.10).

Does it seem fair that to break one law—even a minor law—is to break all laws? Is jaywalking as bad as kidnapping? Is driving a mile over the speed limit as bad as driving intentionally or accidentally through a crowd of people? James says that if one *stumbles*—it was an accident, a trip, a slip up, not a premeditated, first-degree crime spree. How do you explain illogic like this?

Ask a devoted wife whose husband is unfaithful to her, even if it only happened once. Ask a child when they realize a parent has deliberately lied to them. Ask someone whose friend betrayed them. When you violate the *law of love* and break another's heart, a thousand cogent arguments isn't going to convince them not to cry or be upset. Promising you'll never do it again won't immediately restore trust. Violated love is an act of violence (Obad. 10) that can take a long time to recover from.

Think of it this way: shoot a rifle through the side of a barn and it will leave a hole about the size of the bullet. The barn won't collapse; no other part of the structure will be affected.

But shoot a rifle through a plate glass window and the entire window is shattered. Love is plate glass. Love creates relationships in which two or more become one; relationships so tight that when one part is affected, all parts are affected (1 Cor. 12.26).

The next time you read James 2, read it through the eyes of love and see if it's easier to understand.

kenny