

## The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards

**Resolutions #44:** Resolved, that no other end but religion, shall have any influence at all on any of my actions; and that no action shall be, in the least circumstance, any otherwise than the religious end will carry it

### Anchor Text: James 1:27

1. A troubling term
  - a. I want to begin this lesson (without an introduction) to deal with something that probably leapt off the page for some of you and that is Edwards' utilization of the term "religion"
  - b. Over the years, I have heard many people say that Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship
  - c. This sentiment obviously has some merit
    - i. Christianity is worthless without a relationship with Christ
    - ii. If all that we do is ritual and service without a knowledge of Jesus, our "religion" has no saving power (see Matthew 7:21-23)
  - d. Nevertheless, I am not in favor of jettisoning the term "religion"
    - i. Why? Because it's a biblical Word!
    - ii. God Himself uses the term "religion" to describe those who are faithful to Him which means the Lord has a category for religion and we should as well
2. What does it mean?
  - a. There are two components, at least, of biblical religion and I want to define those for us in reverse order
  - b. First, religion is demonstrated by faithful service
    - i. We see this in James 1
    - ii. James defines that religion which is "pure and undefiled" (meaning that which is acceptable to God and, therefore, right) as the service of those who are poor and in need
      1. The widow and the orphan are representative of a potentially larger group of people who are mired in dire circumstances with no prospect of alleviating their need
      2. Unlike the poor man who is able-bodied and would not work, a first century widow had little recourse for sustenance and an orphan was one with no caretaker to provide

3. The point then is that our religion dictates that we should be concerned about these kinds of folks and James would describe this kind of religion as “acceptable”
- iii. The point then is that God does not look down His nose at religion nor does He decree that we should not have a religion, instead He says that what defines our religion makes it either pure (explicit) or impure (implied)
- c. Second, religion is predicated on relationship
  - i. Interestingly enough, the Greek term which is translated “religion” in James 1 is used 5 times in the New Testament
    1. 3 times it appears in James 1:26-27
    2. Another instance occurs in Acts 26 where it describes false religion
    3. The final occurrence is harder to discern because the term is translated into a different English word
      - a. In Colossians 2:18, the same word that is rendered “worship” in James 1 is translated as “worship”
      - b. God is telling the Colossians that their “religion” really should revolve around worship
  - ii. Stated differently, those who have a true religion have a relationship with God that terminates on His glory
    1. This is the crux of the issue
    2. The problem is not that Christians espouse a religion, the problem is that many Christians have a religion that does not lead them to adoration and praise!
    3. True religion is that which is fixated on Christ
    4. Those who are transfixed on the glory of God will, always, worship Him and their worship will flow out of their sanctuaries and private devotional rooms into their personal lives whereby they will serve and love those that God has created and died to redeem!