

1. Verse 26 has the believer operating within a pseudo system that is characterized by sins of the tongue. Here the tongue is being used to expose a false doctrine which adds works to the divine principle of grace for salvation.
2. Functioning within a works system, the religious believer assumes himself to be devout. One of the ways this occurred in Galatia was the notion that the Jewish practice of circumcision was necessary for salvation.
3. There are many other examples of works that people import into the grace system but are unauthorized by Scripture.
4. The unbridled tongue communicates the lie in efforts to lure others away from grace and into legalism.
5. Legalism is a façade designed to certify a person as religious so that he personally receives the glory. This is only effective upon the unsaved, the benighted, and other legalists.
6. Verse 27 presents the opposite of human works by presenting “pure and undefiled religion.” The word “pure” is the adjective **καθαρός (katharós)**.
7. Here the word is used in the spiritual sense of being free of the pollution of sin, human good, and evil. This refers to a believer who is current on rebound, consistent in the study of the Word, and conscientious in its application to life and circumstances.
8. To this is added the word, “undefiled.” It is also an adjective **ἀμίαντος (amíantos)**: “unpolluted, unstained, undefiled by sin.”
9. We could say that this word is purified by the addition of the alpha privative **ἀ (a)**, which purifies the meaning of the following word, **μίαντος (miántos)**, “polluted, stained, defiled,” which is quite the opposite.
10. It is used figuratively here, but as Rick Hughes pointed out on his visit with us this August, it literally refers to being physically defiled.
11. His example was not only graphic but also accurate. The root word is **μιάινω (miaínō)**: “to pollute.” But may be illustrated by an ancient problem-causing device.

12. In the days before plumbing, there was a common household accessory whose use was the collection of human waste and called a “chamber pot,” defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary* as, “A portable vessel used in a bedroom as a toilet.”
13. In biblical days, such was the case for some but for others a sanitation system was employed:

Sanitation measures varied considerably, depending upon the period of time and the particular city involved. Many cities had no provisions for the disposal of human waste. It may have been collected in chamber pots, carried outside the city, and used to fertilize the fields. Some rooms with toilets have been discovered by archaeologists. In some cities archaeologists have also discovered pipes buried in the ground, designed to carry water outside the city walls. Caesarea, the major port city in Palestine in the time of Christ, had a clever method of cleansing its sewers. The sewers, built at sea level and connected to the sea, were flushed twice each day by the incoming and outgoing tides.⁴
14. There has always been some system for people to get their *miaínō* out of the house since otherwise their living quarters would be defiled.
15. The greater issue is to accomplish the same objective with the human soul. The best way of doing so is the inculcation of the Word of God which has the power to flush out the lie by inculcating truth.
16. In James 1:26, the religious man exposes the presence of *miaínō* in his soul by the failure to bridle his tongue.
17. The soul of the person in verse 27, who is positive to the Word of God, reveals an inventory of thought that is “pure and undefiled”: *katharós* and *amíantos*.
18. The end result is the production of divine good based on an inventory of biblical principles and doctrines that redefine the term *θρησκος (thréskos)*: “religion.”
19. Its definition is clarified by the phrase, “in the sight of our God and Father.” It begins with the preposition *παρά (pará)* which indicates being in the near proximity of someone.

⁴ “House,” in *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 584.

20. This “near proximity” is with God the Father since this believer is functioning inside the bubble under the power of the Holy Spirit.
21. We have used the word, *thréskos* (religion) to describe various organizations whose objectives are to win the approval of an alleged deity for some or the God of Christianity for others through efforts of human good.
22. James uses it in verse 27 to transform the “worthless religion” of verse 26 into one that is valuable in God’s sight.
23. James then gives two overt examples of divine good that demonstrate the virtue of pure and undefiled religion: (1) visit orphans and widows in their distress and (2) keep oneself unstained by the world.
24. Remember that the Epistle of James is the first book God authorized for the New Testament canon. James’s audience is made up of Israelites who are the progeny of former Diaspora.
25. James uses two examples from the Tanakh to illustrate divine good applications in their spiritual lives, the first, “to visit orphans and widows in their distress.”
26. Here are some verses that James may have had in mind:

Exodus 22:22 You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.

Psalms 82:3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless.

Jeremiah 7:5 “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between man and his neighbor,

v. 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after others gods to your own ruin,

v. 7 then I will let you dwell in this place [**Judah**], in the land I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

Zechariah 7:10a Do not oppress the
widow or the orphan ...

27. In Jewish society, the widow left without a husband held no authority in the community and therefore was easily oppressed or taken advantage of. This is prohibited throughout the Tanaka.
28. Orphans, both male and female, were to be provided with special three-year tithes. To deny this form of charity was a form of oppression and those who did so fell under divine judgment:

Deuteronomy 27:19 “Cursed is the one
who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan,
and widow.”

29. In the New Testament, the word for “orphan” is a hapax legomenon of the plural noun ὀρφανός (*orphanós*): “orphans.”
30. The word widow, χήρα (*chēra*), is used quite often in the New Testament referring to a woman who is “bereaved of her husband.”
31. James 1:27 is the only passage that mentions them both thus indicating that the apostle is referencing numerous occasions in the Tanaka where mercy for orphans and widows is commanded.
32. The application James emphasizes is the aorist middle infinitive of the verb ἐπισκέπτομαι (*episképtomai*): “to look upon with mercy, favor, or regard with the purpose of providing comfort or help [assistance].”
33. This infinitive is appositional, it refers to a specific example that falls within the broad category named by the head noun which is “religion” defined by two adjectives, *pure* and *undefiled*.
34. The way to translate the appositional infinitive is to insert the word *namely* before the infinitive, for example: “Pure and undefiled religion ... is this, namely, to visit orphans and widows.”⁵

⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, “Semantic Categories: Substantival Uses: Appositional” in *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 606. Consulted for points 33 and 34, above.

35. The word, *episképtomai*, defines the need to be actively aware of the circumstances of women whose husband is dead or orphans whose father is dead.
36. The circumstance that accompanies these two groups is the locative **θλίψις (*thlipsis*)**: “to crush, compress, squeeze; tribulation, trouble, affliction.”
37. These possible translations all depict circumstances that the orphan and widow face on an ongoing, daily, and relentless basis. There is no letup, no relaxation, no ease, no peace.
38. There is a difference between a widow whose husband has died and one whose husband is absent due to abandonment or divorce or one with no husband at all. Those in the latter categories are referred to as a grass widows:

Word History. *Grass widow* is first recorded in 1528, and originally referred to an unmarried woman who has lived with one or more men, a discarded mistress, or a woman who has borne a child out of wedlock. The grass in *grass widow* seems to have originally made reference to the makeshift bed of grass or straw (as opposed to a real bed with a mattress and sheets) on which a woman might lie with her lover before he rises and abandons her—leaving her a widow, so to speak, in the grass. By the mid-1800s, however, *grass widow* had come to refer mainly to a wife whose husband is temporarily absent or one who is living apart from her husband. Nowadays, the term *grass widow* can also refer to a wife who has separated from her husband and to a divorced woman.⁶

39. The number of grass widows is obviously on an upward trajectory in this client nation. The arrangements are varied—cohabitation, friends with benefits, adultery, fornication, divorce, and ménage à trois—but all in violation of the seventh commandment: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). (See also Matthew 5:27; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Galatians 5:19 [immorality (NASB)]; Romans 13:9; and James 2:11: **μοιχεία [*moicheia*].**)

⁶ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), s.v. “grass widow: word history.”

40. But the biblical definition of widow allowed them to fall under the supervision of the court based on the doctrine that God is the special protector of orphans and widows:

Psalm 68:5 He is a father to the fatherless and an advocate for widows. God rules from His holy palace. (NET)

41. God executes justice for the orphan and widow assuring that each is supplied with food and clothing:

Deuteronomy 10:18a (God) justly treats [ἠΨΥ ('*asah*): executes justice for] the orphan and widow ... (NET)

42. The expanded translation of the verse so far reads:

James 1:27 Pure and unpolluted religion in the presence of our God and Father is this: namely to comfort and assist orphans and widows in their tribulation ...

43. The second area of divine-good production that the positive believer can perform is “to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

44. The word “unstained” is the adjective ἄσπιλος (*áspilos*): “without spot.”

NOTE: This adjective does not indicate that the believer to constantly wash dirt off his body.

45. What the believer is to do is to grow in grace and keep his *kardía* free from scar tissue.
46. The world—*cosmos diabolicus*—provides constant bombardment on the soul with every form of erroneous thought: lies, falsehoods, falsifications, half-truths, misinformation (false information intended to deceive), disinformation (false information intended to mislead), propaganda, prevarications, innuendo, delusions, deceptions, deceit, duplicity, treachery, and intimidation.
47. The Church Age is the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict and the twenty-first century is primed to impose mega-intensification of Dark Side strategies and tactics.
48. The soul of the believer must have enough doctrine to interpret incoming data and to respond accordingly.