

We want to look today at how much God hates oppression in any form. Oppression is totally opposed to Goodness, which indeed is the character of God. One verse in the New Testament which emphasizes the truly important in our religion is James 1.27, 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.' The idea of visiting here, of course, relates to actually helping to deliver those people from need. God puts forth two major themes concerning the height of religion: Combating Oppression and Purifying our Lives. We must be concerned for those who are weak and helpless: this is a major principle. We will see that it is like God, for He did had pity on us while we were weak and sought to save us through his son.

It occurs to me to wonder just why it is that God feels this way. We can understand something about being oppressed because each of us has felt some form of oppression at one time or another. It may have been a school bully when we were a kid, or overbearing boss in later years. God explained his ideas to the Israelites in terms of their experience in Exodus 22:21 and 23.9, 'You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt...You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.' This is the core of our relation to other people, as God told us in Leviticus 19.33-34 that we should love the stranger as ourself. God did not just tell us to love our neighbor, but the total stranger as well.

This is really the Golden Rule speaking to us here, where we act toward others as we would want to be treated ourselves. But God has never been oppressed in such a way. God is so good, though, that He knows that it is right without having been in such a situation. You might say that because Christ was oppressed he could sense the rightness of it, but God was against oppression from the very beginning of time. This is true Goodness; that God knows what is Good without basing it solely on what He gets out of it. We need to strive to become more like God, in knowing what is right without always having to be in a position to empathize due to our own experiences.

The main point is that man is being oppressed continually by Satan; this is why there is pain and suffering in our lives. God has looked down with real love at his people in their pain and has worked to break the yoke of bondage to sin. This he has done through His Son Jesus Christ. Christ bore that yoke to the cross so that we might be freed from it. As He Himself said in Matthew 11:28-30, 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' Christ removes the heavy burden from us and replaces it with one that we can live with. With this yoke we can come to eternal life. But there are some that will not bear this burden; they refuse to put it on. We must become what God wants us to be if we are to be free. We must reflect on our deliverance from the oppression of Satan and thank God with all of our hearts that we are free in Christ.