

There are literally millions of orphans in the world today who have been abandoned because of neglect, death, war, natural disaster, family separation, etc. These children are not only helpless, but are also innocent. They did not create or cause their condition. This is why the Scriptures address this issue many times. Please consider the following thoughts and references on this subject:

James defines “pure religion” in terms of moral purity and visiting the orphans and widows in **James 1:27**, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*” The entire book of James deals with genuine faith. Please consider the following references: **James 1:22-27, 2:17-26**. The word religion is a good Bible word which denotes the outward expression of one’s faith and worship. It actually refers to our system of faith or worship as the religion of the Jews, Pagans, or of Christianity (**Acts 26:5, Galatians 1:13-14**). James uses the word to set in contrast that which is real from that which is deceptive. Even though our text is not affirming the sum total of religion, it is still a great part of our religion. Our religion is pure if there is nothing selfish in it, but it is defiled if our conduct is motivated by selfish gain.

In **James 1:27**, the word visit is a figurative expression signifying to take notice, to look upon, or to intervene on behalf of. To visit the fatherless means to help, support, show pity, or to bless. The Biblical use of the word visit means much more than our every day use of it. For example, in **Luke 1:68**, when God visited His people He redeemed them through the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord spoke of the future destruction of Jerusalem in **Luke 19:44**, He told Israel that they knew not the time of their visitation. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ had visited them to be a blessing and to bring salvation. In **Genesis 21:1-2**, God visited Sarah and she conceived and bare a son. In **Psalms 89:32**, God visited Israel to punish them. In **Exodus 20:5**, the Lord said He would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. In **I Peter 2:12**, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is called “the day of visitation.” According to **Matthew 25:31-46**, one of the distinguishing marks of a sheep (believer) is

their ministry to the needy. In **verse 36** the word visited is used to show that action was taken by the Christian on behalf of the needy. Other references to consider are **Jeremiah 5:29, 9:25, Luke 7:16, Numbers 16:29 and Isaiah 10:3**.

According to **Exodus 22:21-24**, the Old Testament laws of God made special provisions for the material needs of orphans and widows. A special clause in God’s Holy Word was given to protect them against oppression. This clause was given at the same time the Ten Commandments were given to Moses at Mount Sinai. According to **Deuteronomy 15:11**, God said that the poor shall never cease out of the land. The Lord Jesus Christ also confirmed this in **Matthew 26:11** when He said, “*Ye have the poor always with you.*” According to **Deuteronomy 10:17-18**, the fatherless were to be fed from the tithe taken once every third year (a relief fund for the destitute). In **Deuteronomy 24:19-22**, the gleaning of the crops are to be left in the field after harvest for the needy. They were also to leave some of the fruit of the trees and vines (**Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22**). As Israel was to come together to observe the feast of the Lord, they were not to leave out the orphans and widows in their community celebrations and worship. The Lord gave serious warnings against anyone who would oppress or take advantage of the fatherless, “*Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.*” (**Deuteronomy 27:19**). Other references to this warning are **Isaiah 1:17, 23, 10:1-3, 58:6-7, Psalm 82:3-4, 94:6, Malachi 3:5, Job 6:27, 22:9, 24:3,9, 29:12, 31:16, 17,21, Jeremiah 5:28, 7:6, 22:3, Ezekiel 22:7, Hosiah 14:3, and Zechariah 7:10**. The Lord has special concern and care for these innocent children. This is evidenced in the title, *A Father of the Fatherless* in **Psalms 68:5**, “*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.*” The Lord not only defends and protects the fatherless, but in Him, they find mercy and justice. The following Scriptures also bear this out: **Psalm 146:9, 10:14, 17, 18, Psalm 103:6, Proverb 28:27**. Please consider this also in **Proverbs 23:10-11**, “*Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.*” The Lord Jesus used a child in **Matthew 18:1-6** to illustrate how one is to be converted and enter into God’s kingdom. In **verses 1- 6**, He shows the consequences of offending one of these

little ones, "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

In conclusion, the word fatherless occurs only once in the New Testament (**James 1:27**). The Greek word from which it is translated is orphanos. The word comfortless in **John 14:18** also comes from the same Greek word meaning destitute, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." In **John 14:16-17**, the Lord promised to send another comforter to the disciples which was the Holy Spirit. The point I am trying to make is that as the Lord Himself was so concerned about the welfare of His disciples, we must be concerned with the welfare of the fatherless. God Almighty is our father because we have been adopted into His family. Before conversion we had no hope, and without God, being strangers from the covenant, God took us into His blessings. May we as believers be a comfort and blessing to the fatherless. This is pure religion and undefiled before God our Father, Amen.



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*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31*

The RICHES OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
March 2003
"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

DEFENDING THE FATHERLESS

*"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this,
To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep
himself unspotted from the world."*

James 1:27

The fatherless (orphans) are mentioned several times in the Scriptures. They are mentioned frequently in the Old Testament with the widow and stranger. The Lord God takes great interest in the needs of those who cannot help themselves. He takes up their cause against anyone who would oppress them or take advantage of them. As we observe God's special love and care for the fatherless, how much more should this touch our hearts. If our religion is to be pure, we cannot turn away from the needy and helpless. To have a heart for God we must have a heart toward those whom God loves.

*"We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows."
Lamentations 5:3*