

James “*Confronting Counterfeit Christianity*”
“*When Faith Proves Real*” (James 2:1 – 3:12)

~ RECAP ~

LAST WEEK WE KICKED OFF...

- Our study thru the book of James...
 - o Where he “*Confronts Counterfeit Christianity*”
 - By speaking to the faith of believers...
 - And pointing out the inconsistencies in their lives.
- A faith that looks good on the outside & says the right things...
 - o But under the surface doesn’t line up with Christian doctrine.
- James teaches the church about authentic faith...
 - o That’s not just claimed but proven!

WE USED THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF...

- A \$100 bill that is tested & proven real...
- A puzzle box with a picture to help put the pieces together.

AS A CHURCH... JAMES WILL TEACH US...

- How to spot the parts of our lives...
 - o That don’t line up with the gospel that Jesus preached...
 - And how we can live out our faith in real life.

LAST WEEK... WE LEARNED ABOUT...

- “*When Faith Gets Real.*”
 - o James isn’t giving us doctrine / defense / detailed testimony
 - Shows us what authentic faith looks like in everyday life...
 - When I’m tested
 - When I’m tempted
 - When I have to submit to God’s Word.
- In each of these areas...
 - o We discovered how our response reveals...
 - The reality between what I *say* I believe...
 - & what I *actually* believe.

~ INTRO ~

TODAY... WE’RE CONFRONTED WITH...

James “*Confronting Counterfeit Christianity*”
“*When Faith Proves Real*” (James 2:1 – 3:12)

- Truths that will **prove** our faith is real...
 - o Because James highlights how...
 - Following Jesus effects my motives...
 - Following Jesus effects my actions...
 - Following Jesus effects my speech.
- So I’ve titled today’s message...
 - o “*When Faith Proves Real*”

~ IDEA 1 – In My Motives (2:1-13) ~

(v. 1)

JAMES IS SPEAKING TO SPECIFIC A SPECIFIC PRINCIPLE...

- That’s foundational in the body of Christ:
 - o Treating people fairly...
 - And not giving preferential treatment.
- He asks them a confrontational question...
 - o Speaking to **what** was happening in their churches:
 - “*How can you say you follow Jesus...*
 - *And still live in this type of lifestyle?*”

(vv. 2-4)

NEXT WE’RE GIVEN A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE...

- Of what was happening with the real believers in the early church...
 - o Different type of attitude toward...
 - The rich person vs. the poor person.

THIS WAS **SELECTIVE MINISTRY**...

- Serving based on status / appearance / benefit
 - o And boils it down to the issue of the heart...
 - **Misguided motives.**
- You’re thinking about what you can get from this person...
 - o Instead of how you can give to this person.

(vv. 5-11)

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HE MOVES ON TO LOGICALLY EXPLAIN WHY...

- This behavior is inconsistent for the believer...
 - o Because Jesus taught:

- (v. 5) God chose the poor to be rich in faith
 - (Matt. 5:3)

- (v. 8) Love your neighbor as yourself is still applicable
 - (Matt. 7:12)

- (v. 10) When you ignore one command...
 - You're guilty of them all
 - o (Matt. 5:19)

(vv. 12-13)

FINALLY... HE EXHORTS THEM...

- By giving them the path forward...
 - o Do what is right!
- He doesn't just call them out...
 - o He reminds them that mercy triumphs over judgement.

THIS SPEAKS TO US TODAY...

- By causing us to reflect on our motives in ministry:
 - o Counterfeit Christianity: “*How does this fit my need?*”
 - o Authentic relationship: “*How can I meet this need?*”

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS SHOULD BE MOTIVATED BY...

- *What Can I give* instead of *What can I get*...
 - (Mark 10:45) NLT

FOLLOWING JESUS IS PROVEN REAL...

- In the reasons that I participate (or don't)
- In the reasons that I support (or don't)
 - o What's my motivation?

HERE'S HOW WE CAN TEST OUR MOTIVES:

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- Do I avoid certain ministry opportunities...
 - Because I don’t want to feel uncomfortable?
- Do I say “yes” to serving only when it’s convenient...
 - Or when it fits my schedule?
- If no one noticed me or thanked me...
 - Would I still do it?

WE COULD EVEN GO DEEP WITH THIS...

- And ask ourselves why we’re following Jesus in first place...
 - For a religious feeling...
 - Or to surrender my life because He’s given His.

~ IDEA 2 – In My Actions (2:14-26) ~

(v. 14)

JAMES ASKS TWO QUESTIONS...

- That challenge the person who claims to be a Christian...
 - But lives a life that shows no signs of spiritual life.
 - *What good is it if someone says they have faith but don’t prove it by action?*
 - *Can this type of faith save anyone?*
- He’s not attacking salvation “*by grace through faith*” (Eph. 2:8)
 - He’s exposing a version of faith...
 - That makes no impact on how we live.

(vv. 15-20)

NEXT JAMES USES REAL-LIFE TESTS...

- To expose counterfeit faith.
 - Four markers of real faith:
 - 1) It responds to needs (vv. 15-16)

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- a. Nice words aren’t enough – real faith responds

2) It’s fuels my actions (v. 17)

- a. Accepting Jesus as savior is the starting point...
 - i. Not the ending point.

3) It’s supported by visible evidence (v. 18)

- a. Faith is personal but never private

4) It goes beyond intellectual belief (v. 19)

- a. The demons believe the truth...
 - i. But they don’t obey the truth.
- b. This is sobering for the world today...
 - i. Because it emphasizes the 18” gap.

(vv. 21-26)

IF THESE MARKERS WEREN’T ENOUGH...

- James gives two powerful examples of vibrant faith from the O.T.
 - Abraham (Gen. 22:5, 7-12) NLT
 - Rahab (Josh. 2:4, 6, 15) NLT
- Both acted in obedience
 - Risked something for God
 - Demonstrated faith that could be seen
 - (Illustrated to generations)

WHAT CAN BE POINTED TO IN YOUR LIFE...

- As proof of your relationship with Jesus?
 - **(Fire illustration)**

FOLLOWING JESUS PROVES REAL...

- Not on Sunday morning...
 - But on Monday thru Saturday...
 - Is there signs of life in my relationship with Jesus...
 - More that just a once-a-week ritual?
 - (1 John 3:18) NLT

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~ IDEA 3 – In My Speech (3:1-12) ~

(vv. 1-2)

JAMES MOVES ON...

- To confront another issue within the churches...
 - o Weapons of mass destruction...
 - The power of the tongue!

HE STARTS OUT WITH A WARNING TO TEACHERS...

- But then zooms out and identifies...
 - o We all stumble in this area.

WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND...

- The tongue is a reflection of our heart...
 - o And is a key to self-control.
- If we surrender our speech to Jesus...
 - o The other aspects of our lives will follow.
 - (Matt. 12:33-37) NLT

(vv. 3-6)

JAMES USES THREE ILLUSTRATIONS...

- To teach us **how** small things (our tongue)...
 - o Can have a massive influence...
 - Just like our tongues

1) A bit in a horse's mouth (uncontrolled)

2) A rudder on a ship (controlled)

3) A spark that starts a forest fire (influential)

THE LESSON HERE IS...

- How impactful our words can be:
 - o Things can seem small...
 - But steer our relationships
 - Build up or burn down trust
 - Set the direction of our life

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- (v. 6) James uses harsh language here...
 - o To demonstrate how the tongue can be dangerous!

“What harsh words! James is saying that the full range of iniquity finds an outlet through the tongue... It’s virtually impossible to seethe with anger without expressing our rage in words. Bitterness sours our speech. Pride prattles on and on. Hate explodes from the lips. The tongue can suddenly turn an otherwise gentle person into a monster. It’s a world of iniquity”
– Charles Swindoll

(vv. 7-12)

JAMES UNDERSCORES WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT...

- Because the believer can’t bless God & curse others.
 - o We can tame animals (birds/ reptiles/ fish) but not the tongue
 - <Trying to start my mower>
 - o We bless God in worship but curse His image
 - <People are the image of God>
 - o Fresh water vs salty spring & inconsistent fruit
 - <Inconsistent speech reveals a divided heart>

FOLLOWING JESUS BECOMES REAL IN MY SPEECH...

- Because my mouth becomes a source of life & not just noise.
 - o How do I talk about other when they’re not around?
 - o What comes out when I’m frustrated?
 - o Do I bless God on Sunday’s & gossip/criticize on Mondays?

AS PEOPLE SPEND TIME AROUND ME...

- Do they leave refreshed or worn down?
 - o (Colossians 4:6) NLT

JAMES TEACHES US...

- Our words are a mirror of my walk with Jesus.
 - o Words shape reality / influence hearts / impact lives

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- If I’m following Jesus my mouth should sound like Him...
 - Not like the world
- Because faith is proved real doesn’t just show up in what I believe...
 - But in what I say.

~ IN CLOSING (CALL WORSHIP TEAM) ~

AS WE’VE BEEN STUDYING THRU ROMANS...

- We’ve learned how Jesus has saved us from punishment we deserve...
 - How we’ve been declared righteous before God...
 - AND that He gives us the power to change...
 - Not just commands to follow

IF THIS MESSAGE HAS IDENTIFIED INCONSISTENCIES...

- I don’t want you to respond with fear or frustration...
 - But with an open heart to receive help that Jesus offers.
- When we look at the puzzle box and notice that a piece is out of place...
 - We don’t need to walk away discouraged...
 - But to make adjustments where necessary.