

## **Adult Sunday school Lesson February 12, 2014**

### **"Show Your Faith by Your Works"**

**Lesson Text:** James 2:14-26

**Background Scripture:** James 2:14-26

**Devotional Reading:** Luke 7:1-10

### **TODAY'S LESSON AIMS**

**Learning Fact:** To summarize James' argument that faith and works are inseparable.

**Biblical Principle:** To demonstrate the reality of our faith by reaching out to others with the compassion of Christ.

**Daily Application:** To identify one way to put faith into action and do so.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Genuine or Counterfeit?**

Have you noticed how much paper money (currency) has changed in the last few years? Designs have become more complex, colors have been added, special marks have been included. All these changes have one purpose: to make counterfeiting more difficult.

But even with all these changes, a skilled counterfeiter can still create a fake that can fool many people. It still takes experts to distinguish the genuine from some phonies. One becomes an expert in spotting counterfeit currency by studying the real thing. Skilled experts can see the subtle differences because they know the real article so well.

A parallel problem faced the Christians to whom James wrote. How could they identify true faith? While God alone can know what is in a person's heart, James says that we can identify true faith in ourselves by what it produces.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

**Time:** A.D. 44

**Place:** Jerusalem

Evaluating actions in order to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit faith, the theme of today's text, is a well-established one in Scripture. The Old Testament prophets commonly condemned those who confessed faith but acted with disobedience to God (Isaiah 29:13; Ezekiel 33:31). Jesus famously condemned religious leaders of His time for their hypocrisy; they claimed to be faithful to God, but they disobeyed Him habitually (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 23:13-33). Paul pointed out at length that all claims to standing with God are empty without deeds directed by godly love (1 Corinthians 13). The Bible is filled with disturbing examples of those who claimed faith in God, but failed to put it into practice.

The context of today's passage gives us a clue about the circumstances that prompted James' discussion of faith and works. James' readers struggled to reflect God's mercy toward the poor (James 2:1-13, last week's lesson). The readers' faith in the God who graciously met their needs was not being expressed in their meeting the needs of others (compare 1 John 3:17, 18). Such a problem cannot go unaddressed!

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

The Letter of James is primarily concerned with the practical outworking of Christian conduct. The emphasis is not on doctrine or theology per se, but on how the Christian faith should be applied on a day-to-day basis. James' purpose was to provide his readers with concrete instruction on how to grow in Christian maturity and how to live a holy life. In short, James wanted his audience to know how to become doers of the Word, not just hearers of it.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Living, Working Faith**

James takes his readers to school on genuine faith. He teaches them thoroughly what the real article looks like. Real faith, living faith, always works. It is always active. It never leaves a person or the world around the person the same.

If we want to recognize genuine faith, we should first look at ourselves. The assessment of genuine faith is a self-assessment. What

actions flow from my faith? Is my life different from what it was before I came to faith in Christ? Do I make excuses about my lack of actions?

Perhaps we should remember that one of the works of genuine faith is prayer. We pray to God only if we know that we need His power to help, only if we believe that He can and will help. We begin by asking God to strengthen our faith and enable us to put it into action. Then we trust Him to sustain us in the adventure that follows.

### **PRAYER**

O God, we praise You for Your patience with us, Your often workless people. Increase our faith, Lord! Gird us for action in Your world. Make us alive in our faith and works together. We pray in the name of Jesus, the faithful one, amen.

### **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

A workless faith is a worthless faith.

### **ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

In next week's lesson "**Control Your Speech,**" we will close our series in James studying how to respond to others with verbal self-control. Study James 3:1-12.