

Faith Loves, Part 1

Lesson for Sunday, October 15, 2023

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ This is our last lesson in chapter 1 of James. Has anyone memorized James 1:22?
 - Give people a chance to say it...
 - If you feel led, bring them something as a reward!
- ⇒ How would you describe a religious person? *Allow for discussion...*
- ⇒ In today's passage, James clearly defines the meaning of what constitutes "true religion." As we work through this lesson, the obvious question will be, "How do we measure up to what James is teaching?"
- ⇒ Think of this passage like this: What is God's test for your religion?

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Is your religion **worthless**? Verse 26
 - a. Worthless religion is **unintentional**. Verse 26a - "If any man among you seem to be religious."
 - i. The NASB says it like this, "If anyone thinks of himself to be religious."
 - ii. James is getting at one's intentions.
 - iii. Implied is a willingness on the part of the individual to obey. This is an important point for us to consider.
 - iv. There aren't many professing Christians who do not want to obey God. But there are many who never get intentional about their good intentions!
 - v. Too many believers are backslidden. Too many are hanging on to their sin. Too many refuse to completely submit to the Lordship of Christ.
 - vi. The bottom line is that it doesn't matter what our intentions are. Throughout God's Word there is a clear distinction between our willingness to obey and actually obeying (see James 1:22).
 - b. Worthless religion has **loose lips**. 26b - "and bridleth not his tongue."
 - i. One of the most important biblical principles is this: Our speech reflects the true condition of our hearts.
 - ii. See Matthew 15:18 and Luke 6:45.
 - iii. When we speak, we reveal the truth of our hearts. James is teaching that the tongue is a strong test of our religion.
 - iv. Application: We live in a social media age that preaches, "If you think it, post it!" How should this principle impact how we speak and even post?
 - c. Worthless religion is **self-deceiving**. 26c - "this man's religion is in vain"
 - i. The word vain means worthless or empty.
 - ii. James isn't mincing his words! "You say you are religious? If you live in disobedience and can't control your speech you are deceiving yourself!"
 - iii. James mentions the power of self-deceit at least two times in this first chapter. It is a reminder that we are all susceptible to deceiving our own hearts. Read Jeremiah 17:9.
2. Is your religion **worthwhile**? Verse 27
 - a. James provides five qualities of a worthwhile religion.
 - i. A worthwhile religion is **pure**.
 - ii. A worthwhile religion is **undefiled**.

- iii. A worthwhile religion visits **orphans**.
- iv. A worthwhile religion visits distressed **widows**.
- v. A worthwhile religion produces **holiness** in your life.
- b. To summarize James: True religion is characterized by practical compassion and personal purity.
 - i. The first two characteristics and the last that James mentions apply to our personal holiness. We are to strive to be like Jesus in every aspect of our lives. This reminds us of Jesus's first command in Matthew 22:37.
 - ii. The third and fourth characteristics describe the practical compassion that should be seen in the life of every Christian. This reminds us of Jesus's second command in Matthew 22:39.
- c. James is teaching us that our faith should infiltrate every area of our personal being, and be seen outwardly in our practical compassion for others.
- d. This is our obligation as followers of God, not just an option for us to consider.

APPLICATION:

- ⇒ This is a good lesson for a silent participation exercise. Walk them through the characteristics you have taught and give them a private moment to rank themselves in each category.
- ⇒ Discuss: Which good intentions do you need to get intentional about?
 - It may be their daily time with God or to work at their prayer life.
 - It may be being more faithful to the Lord's House.
 - It may be time to finally begin serving.
- ⇒ Discuss: How do we maintain personal purity and holiness in such a sinfully dirty world?
- ⇒ Discuss: How likely are you to seek out others who have needs? Why or why not? Is there a need that comes to mind that you need to meet this week?