

**JM 2.21-24** ~ *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?* <sup>22</sup> *Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?* <sup>23</sup> *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."* *And he was called the friend of God.* <sup>24</sup> *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

**EX: JM** echoes **HB**: *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,* <sup>18</sup> *of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"* <sup>19</sup> *concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.* (**HB 11.17-19**) **JM** points to the **action** that results from faith, while **HB** points to the faith that **brought about** the action.

**JM 2.25** ~ *Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

**EX:** He does the same with the example of Rahab: *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.* (**HB 11.31**). He points out that her faith was **proven** by her action, while the **HB** writer shows that her faith **motivated** her action.

**AP:** Today, it's popular to discount and wave away **"works"** as unnecessary aspects of our faith. But that was never the intent of the writers of Scripture. Rather, Scripture makes it clear that faith requires works to be real, and that works require faith, as well! Without faith, our works are empty, and without works, our faith is dead.

**GL 5.4-6** ~ *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.* <sup>5</sup> *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.* <sup>6</sup> *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

**TS 3.8** ~ *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*

To be a **real Christian**, we must **practice faithful works**.

**JM 2.26** ~ *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

## CONCLUSION

**JM 2.22-27** ~ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* <sup>23</sup> *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;* <sup>24</sup> *for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.* <sup>25</sup> *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.* <sup>26</sup> *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.* <sup>27</sup> *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

All around us, we see counterfeit Christians—bearing the name, but mere dupes—phony. **JM** encountered them in his time, and we see them today. But **JM** reminds us that **real Christians** are **practicers of the truth**: practicing **impartial love** and **faithful works**. And if we desire to be **real Christians** today, we must be willing to do the same!

**IS 29.13** ~ *Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,*

## INVITATION

**QUESTION:** What is a real Christian like?

## TRN TO JM 2

### INTRODUCTION

**ILL—Walking down Chicago Street** (first time I went there, I saw dozens of people with sunglasses and other products; at the time, the rage was "Oakley" glasses—hundreds of dollars, they'd sell for \$10) Of course, we realized they weren't the real thing: we called them **"Foakleys"**. This was my first encounter with **"counterfeit consumer goods"**.

### MANUFACTURING/Counterfeit Products/Definition

### BACKGROUND

**JM** is a book that seems simple. Its topics are practical, and its language understandable. However, the deeper you dive into it, the more you come to understand its hidden complexity. *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.* (**JM 1.1**) In his writing, **JM** intended to help the members of the church to understand just what it meant to be a real Christian.

Today, there are millions of people who profess Christianity—but their teachings and philosophies can vary dramatically. In many ways, they can seem as counterfeit as those **"Foakley"** sunglasses. **So, what does it mean to be a real Christian?** Last week, we determined that a **real Christian** is someone who is **patient in testing**—whether that testing comes from without or within. But as he comes to the end of the chapter, he speaks a word of encouragement:

**JM 2.22-27** ~ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* <sup>23</sup> *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;* <sup>24</sup> *for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.* <sup>25</sup> *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.* <sup>26</sup> *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.* <sup>27</sup> *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

**JM** desired for his audience—the Christians who read his writing—to be **real Christians**. And that meant more than simply marking a box on a survey or placing membership with a congregation. As he continues, he explains that being a Christian means **practicing the truth**—it means changing the way we act towards others.

I've never much cared about having **"the real thing"**—I drink Sams Club Zero soda at home, and I wear **Member's Mark** jeans. While I appreciate the importance of honoring a copyright, I've never really cared about making sure my clothes have the right brand name. I don't mind wearing something that's considered **"a counterfeit"**. But when it comes to my faith, that, I want to be **"the real thing"**. Because when it comes to Christianity and faith, there is nothing like **"the real thing"**.

### BD1: The Christian Practices Impartial Love (JM 2.1-13)

That was a phrase used back in the early 70s and into the 80s by CocaCola—as they fought against the incursion of other sodas trying to capture market share. Interestingly, Pepsi tried something a bit different.

## FOOD/The Pepsi Challenge/Result of the Challenge

The message Pepsi pushed following this challenge was the idea that people had a clear preference for one soda over the other: that they showed partiality. This is normal in our selection of sodas, foods, and music genres. But James points out that it is dangerous for us to do the same with our love:

**JM 2.1-4** ~ *My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. <sup>2</sup> For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, <sup>3</sup> and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” <sup>4</sup> have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*

**EX:** James saw a serious sin being evidenced in the membership: they were showing partiality: specifically when presented with the choice of the wealthy visitor and the poor one. They’d give special attention to the wealthy, and they’d practically ignore the poor. This isn’t just a 1<sup>st</sup> century problem! We’re used to giving special attention and deferment to the **“big names”**—to those people who give a bit extra money in the collection tray—to those **“big names”** in town. But James sought for the people in the church to understand the error of their ways!

**JM 2.5-7** ~ *Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? <sup>7</sup> Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?*

**EX:** See, it was made even worse by the fact that, when it came to faith and obedience, these **“big names”** might have been big in pocketbook, but they were small in faith. These **“big names”** were used to using their power and influence to persecute and to even blaspheme Christians and Christ. How ridiculous it was to chase after these **“big names”** when they, ultimately, were not even faithful, right, or righteous!

**JM 2.8-9** ~ *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; <sup>9</sup> but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

**EX:** They should have shown love and support and taught the gospel to anyone who’d listen. But instead, they were always and evermore chasing after the ones with the biggest wallet. But their partiality didn’t just end with how they treated their visitors. It also showed in how they viewed their own sins:

**JM 2.10-11** ~ *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. <sup>11</sup> For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*

**EX: Have you ever known of a church or a Christian who focused on one sin above all others?** Perhaps it was a sexual sin. Or a false approach to worship. Or something else. In any case, they always focus their teaching and their preaching on this terrible and awful sin that this person over there is committing, while ignoring the equally terrible and awful sin that they, themselves are guilty of. But regardless of the sin, if you commit it, you’ve *become a transgressor of the law!*

**JM 2.12-13** ~ *So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

**EX:** And this brings us to the final point of passage: at the core of a true Christian is an understanding of the equality and value of all people: rich and powerful, or poor and powerless. At the core of the true Christian is an understanding of the wickedness of sin—adultery, murder, sexual sin, and gossip. The **true Christian practices impartial love**—founded and based in mercy. This is the mercy we desire to have for ourselves—so how much more should we be willing to have it for others!

**LV 19.15-16** ~ *‘You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. <sup>16</sup> You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.*

**AP:** Brethren, we can’t claim to be Christians if we show partiality—towards an individual or against a particular sin. We must show the love and mercy of God, Himself—who desires all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth!

**RM 2.11-16** ~ *For there is no partiality with God. <sup>12</sup> For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law <sup>13</sup> (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; <sup>14</sup> for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) <sup>16</sup> in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

## **BD2: The Christian Practices Faithful Works (JM 2.14-26)**

### **MANUFACTURING/Counterfeit Products/Counterfeit vs Dupe**

When it comes to physical products, it can sometimes be difficult to tell the real thing from the duplicate. But when it comes to a Christian, it’s pretty simple: you just need to take a look at them, for **a real Christian practices faithful works**.

**JM 2.14-17** ~ *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? <sup>17</sup> Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

**EX: JM** here gives a simple illustration: he paints the picture of a Christian who claims Christianity, but whose life has no evidence of it. They claim they have faith, but they don’t have any works to back up that faith. He says they’re like a person who tries to feed someone on the mere idea of food—it’s ridiculous! But so, he says, is a person who claims Christianity on faith, alone.

**JM 2.18-20** ~ *But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! <sup>20</sup> But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

**EX: “Well, you can trust in your works, and I’ll trust in my faith”**—the idea was they were saying that their “faith” was holier than Christian works—it was higher, somehow, because it wasn’t tainted by the flesh. But **JM**, again, points out how ridiculous that concept was. After all, he says, **“You can’t show your faith without works, but I can show my faith by my works.”** Ultimately, their **“workless faith”** was no more holy than the **“faith”** of a demon—it was hollow. It was dead.