

Counterfeit Faith

Matthew 7:13-14

Preface

Faith may be the most powerful force in the universe! Without faith, nothing could take place. If you did not have faith in the manufacturer of these chairs, you would not be able to sit down. If you did not have faith in other people and their products, you could not eat, sleep or function.

Faith is the most important aspect of a Christian life. The Bible says we cannot please God without faith. Jesus criticized the disciples at times for not having enough faith, *“Oh you of little faith.”*

Faith is like money. The more you have the more you can acquire and accomplish with it. The Bible gives us many examples of people who had strong faith and accomplished great things for God. Noah, Moses, Abraham, David and Paul come to mind as men with outstanding faith.

The Bible also reveals examples of those who were weak in their faith. The children of Israel were routinely scolded for their weak and short-lived faith.

Scripture

“¹³Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

Introduction

We’ve all been to the store, handed the clerk a large bill only to have them make a mark on it to confirm it isn’t counterfeit. Of course the pen marker beats the old method where they would

hold your bill up to the light and inspect it carefully. I’ve always found that a bit embarrassing. I want to ask if I really look like the kind of person who would be passing counterfeit bills.

Counterfeit items are things that are meant to look like the real thing but they are not. Someone once said, **“For everything God has the devil offers a counterfeit.” Faith is no exception.**

Many people today have counterfeit faith. In many ways it looks like the real thing but it is not. At times they talk the talk and profess the right things but when you look carefully, the faith is not the genuine article.

Many people in America who profess to be Christians are living by counterfeit faith. Counterfeit faith is what has allowed our country to become a nation where abortions are perfectly legal. Counterfeit faith has allowed prayer and God’s word to be stripped from our schools.

Counterfeit faith is what allows our leaders to intentionally lie to the public. Counterfeit faith is the only explanation for a President who would profess to be a Christian and yet bow to pray along beside Muslims who hate Christians and defy the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Counterfeit faith is fragile and it is shallow. It looks good from the outside but when challenged, it is found to be weak. **The lure of counterfeit faith is that it offers the easy road.** You get the look of genuine faith without the obligations of genuine faith.

I challenge you to hear the characteristics of counterfeit faith and search your heart about your own faith.

1. Counterfeit faith desecrates the kingdom of God.

You might have noticed that Jesus spoke of the narrow and wide gate immediately following a well known statement we call the Golden Rule; *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”*

Genuine Christian faith lives by this rule. When we live by genuine faith we learn to put the well being of others before ourselves. Real faith is measured by how we treat others.

God's word tells us that when we become Christians, we begin the process of regeneration. This is a process by which we live by the life, death and resurrection of our Lord. The Bible calls this "*newness of life.*"

With genuine faith, we mature as Christians. That doesn't mean we learn the ropes of attending church. It means we begin to walk and live in ways the Holy Spirit leads us.

Counterfeit faith stops short of regeneration. It professes Christ but doesn't reflect a life patterned after Christ. With counterfeit faith, our lives do not reconcile with what we claim to be; Christians. We claim to be servants, but we do not fairly represent the Master we serve.

Illus: I received a call this week from a lady at Lifeway Christian Bookstore. She was calling to let me know they had to order a new Beth Moore Bible study package for our church because the one they had was missing the DVD. She went on to explain they sometimes have a problem with people stealing the DVDs. I thought to myself, who would steal a Bible study DVD? Can you imagine leading a Bible study with a stolen DVD?

But wait a moment before you get too excited. If you profess to be Christian but love money more than your Lord, you have been allured by counterfeit faith.

If you talk about the Lord's work but are not faithful in your giving, you have counterfeit faith.

If you secretly view pornography you have counterfeit faith.

If you are dishonest when it benefits you and justify it by saying you saved money, you have counterfeit faith.

Do you frequent places that you should not? Do you abuse alcohol or drugs? Do you use the Lord's name in vein? Do you

criticize others? Do you disobey God's word by not loving your spouse more than yourself?

If you profess to be a Christian but you are comfortable doing things that you know the Lord condemns, you have counterfeit faith. Counterfeit faith professes Christ but doesn't live for Christ.

Counterfeit faith tears down the kingdom of God. People observe those who claim to be Christians yet live in a manner that is wrong or questionable and they conclude, "I want no part of God."

As Christians, we are not perfect but we are striving to be Christ like. We often get unfairly called hypocrites. But sometimes we are just that – hypocrites. And when we are, we desecrate the kingdom of God, the body of Christ.

2. Counterfeit faith is driven by emotions.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel had a repeating pattern. When things were tough they would turn to God for help. When God would bless them and meet their needs, they would soon stray from worship. Once things became hard again, they would go to their knees and beseech God for mercy.

This is how shallow counterfeit faith works. It is driven by emotions and self gratification. We see this today as well. I know people who will ask me to pray for them as they are facing financial, marital or health problems. They will be faithful to church for a few weeks but as soon as their problems ease up a little, they disappear from worship.

There is another way we see counterfeit faith in Christians today. Some people get involved in church and volunteer to serve in different areas. But, the first time someone says something negative to them or fails to speak to them, their feelings are hurt and they bail out on God and worship.

We all get our feelings hurt from time to time. But the Bible tells us specifically what to do – go to the person and discuss the

matter. The answer is never to quit your responsibilities. Think about what God must think of us. He calls us to serve Him in a position but we quit that position because a fallible human hurts our feelings.

What does that say about our faith? **It says our faith is based on emotions rather than genuine commitment to God.** For some people, God is only as real as they can feel Him, he is only as real as their last emotional high, the last time a song or spoken word touched them.

Being emotionally committed to God will never be the same as being obedient to God. James says, *“Faith without works is dead.”*

I’ve heard all the explanations about why people are not faithful in worship and service to God. Let me just say this; **“If you have genuine faith, you will be faithful.”**

3. Counterfeit faith doesn’t withstand time.

Illus: Most of us remember the glory days of Alabama Football. I can remember Coach Bear Bryant and his consistently winning seasons. During that time it seemed like everyone was an Alabama fan. But then there were these not so glorious days that followed. Alabama fans had to endure losing seasons, embarrassing coaches, investigations and even probation. For several years, Alabama fans were hard to find and if you found one, they were not standing tall with pride. Well the good times are back again for Alabama fans. We are the 2009 national champions and Alabama fans are everywhere.

As annoying as fair weather fans might be to die-hard fans, it is ok to switch loyalty in sports. But this is not acceptable behavior in our relationship with God.

Genuine faith will withstand the test of time. **Genuine faith has “stick-to-it-ness” where counterfeit faith will quit every time.**

Like most churches, our church roll is full of people who lack the faith to attend church on even a half-way regular basis. Easter and Christmas services are always bitter sweet for pastors. While we are glad to have a big crowd for church, it breaks our heart at the number of people who only come on those days for we know this reflects **lack of genuine faith and love for God.**

There are also those who are quick to serve God when there is a lot of excitement and enthusiasm around. But when it gets down to the everyday work, they lose interest. Let me give you an example. Do you remember the great Easter program that was presented by our choir and others this year? We had a great choir full of singers. How many did we have in choir today, last week and the week before?

Illus: I remember my Uncle Butch. He and my Aunt Jan always had more money and more exciting lives than we did. They would come once a year to visit for Christmas and it was always interesting to see what they were into at that time. At one time it was camping and they brought their nice camper. One year they came and announced that Butch was now a Preacher. During the entire visit they talked about their work in the church and Uncle Butch’s preaching. The next year rolled around and Uncle Butch was no longer a preacher. He was back to cursing and bragging and their new fad was sailing. They had purchased a sail boat and they were really into sailing.

Genuine faith is never a fad. When God calls you to walk down His path and you commit to Him, there is no turning back to the old way. Genuine faith will withstand the test of time.

Conclusion

Illus: There's a old story that's told about a tightrope walker who did incredible stunts. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he would go back across the tightrope, blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow.

As the story goes, there was an American promoter who offered him a lot of money to come to America and perform across Niagara Falls." The tightrope entertainer agreed but the promoter expressed sincere doubt that he could do it.

When the day came the crowds went wild as the man walked the tightrope and then walked it again blindfolded pushing a wheelbarrow.

Afterwards, he came to the promoter and said, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?" He said, "Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it." "No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do, you just did it." "No, no, " said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?" "Yes," said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it." "Good," said Tightrope, "then get in the wheelbarrow."

Counterfeit faith believes, genuine faith gets in the wheelbarrow. Faith is something that must be demonstrated in the way we live. Paul Harvey once said, ***"If you don't live it, you don't believe it."***

Jesus said, *"No servant can serve two masters."* Luke 16:13 NIV

In our text, Jesus tells us there are only two ways in this world. There is the wide way and the narrow way, right way and wrong way, good and evil, God and Satan, heaven and hell.

Many will choose the broad way that is easy and full of temporary pleasures. In the wide broad way one will find plenty of liberty to live life for their own pleasure. But in the narrow way, you can find real peace through the liberty of living for Christ.

Which path are you traveling? Is your faith genuine or counterfeit?