FAITH THAT SEEKS WISDOM — PART 3

James 1:5–8 and Acts 8–9

INTRODUCTION — WHEN FAITH REQUIRES OBEDIENCE

-**Last week**, we continued our **study** through the book of James.

-And I really **appreciated** the **discussion** we had together.

-In fact, we had so much discussion that we **DIDN'T** get through everything I had **prepared**!

-Because my goal **ISN'T** simply to **get through** the **material**.

-My goal is for us to **understand God's Word** and allow it to **transform our lives**.

-Now, remember what **we've been studying** in James chapter 1.

-James is **writing to believers** who are experiencing **trials and difficulties**.

-And he encourages them to **persevere**, because the testing of their faith produces **spiritual maturity**.

-But then, in verse 5, James tells us that when we lack **wisdom**, we should **ask God**.

-And in verse 6, he tells us to **ask** in **faith**.

-Then in verses 7 and 8, James **warns us** about something that can **undermine that trust**.

-Double-mindedness.

-Remember the Greek word we studied?

-Dipsychos.

-It carries the **idea** of being **two-souled**.

-A person whose **heart is divided** between **competing allegiances**.

-And last week, we examined **three examples** of those **allegiances**.

1. Self-preservation.

-When our desire to **protect ourselves** becomes more important than **trusting God**.

2. Cultural validation.

-When our desire for the **approval of others** becomes more important than our **commitment to Christ**.

3. Financial security.

-When our desire to **protect our money** becomes more important than our willingness to **obey God**.

-And here's what I want us to remember from that discussion.

-Double-mindedness **ISN'T** simply having **questions**, experiencing **fear**, or facing **uncertainty**.

-It's allowing something else to **compete** with our **allegiance** to **God**.

-And that's **important** for what we're **going** to **study** tonight.

-Because I want to **return** to a **story** we've been following in the **book of Acts**.

-Remember, we've been **looking at Acts** because it helps us understand the **historical setting**

-of the **scattered believers** James was **writing** to.

-In Acts 1:8, **Jesus told** His **disciples** they would be His **witnesses** in **Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria,** and to the **ends of the earth**.

-And the church **began growing** in Jerusalem.

-But then something happened that **dramatically accelerated** the spread of the **gospel**.

-Persecution.

-In Acts 7, **Stephen** was **killed** for his testimony about Jesus.

-And in Acts 8:1, we read that a **great persecution** broke out against the church in **Jerusalem**.

-And believers were **scattered** throughout **Judea** and **Samaria**.

-Now, remember what **Acts 8:4** tells us.

Acts 8:4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

-The **persecution** was intended to **stop** the **church**.

-But instead, the **gospel continued spreading** as believers **carried the message** of Jesus into new **communities**.

-And one of the **men leading** that **persecution** was a young man named **Saul**.

-He was **determined** to **destroy** the church.

-He was **entering homes** and **dragging** believers **away**.

-And eventually, he **traveled toward Damascus** with **authority** to **arrest** followers of Jesus.

-But on that **road**, something **happened** that Saul never **anticipated**.

AN ENCOUNTER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

-He **encountered** the **risen** Jesus **Christ** and everything **changed**.

-Now, I want us to **think about that** for just a moment.

-Because Saul **DIDN'T** set out for **Damascus** looking for **Jesus**.

-He was going there to **persecute** the **followers** of **Jesus**.

-He **believed** he was **doing** the right thing.

-He had religious **convictions**, **authority**, and a **determination** to stop the spread of **Christianity**.

-But on that **road**, he **encountered** the very **One** he was **persecuting**.

-And that **encounter** completely **changed** the direction of his **life**.

-Years later, Paul would **reflect** on who he had been **before meeting Christ**.

1 Timothy 1:12–15 [12] I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. [13] Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. [14] The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

[15] Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. [16] But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

-Paul describes himself as a former **blasphemer, persecutor,** and **violent man**.

-But he says something **remarkable** in verse 14.

"The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

-And then in **verse 15**, Paul calls himself the **worst of sinners**.

-This is a **man** who had **persecuted** the church.

-He had **approved** of **Stephen's death**.

-He had **dragged believers** from their **homes**.

-But the **same Jesus** he had been opposing **extended mercy** and **grace to him**.

-And I want you to **notice** something.

-Jesus **DIDN'T** simply change **Saul's behavior**.

-He **changed** the **direction** and **purpose** of his **life**.

-And later, when **Paul stood** before **King Agrippa**, he shared his **testimony** again.

-He shared how **Jesus appeared** to him and **commissioned** him to **proclaim** the **gospel**.

Acts 26:16–18 [12] "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. [13] About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. [14] We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' [15] "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. [16] 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will

see of me. [17] I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them [18] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

-The **man** who had been trying to **silence** the **message** of **Jesus**...

-Would **spend** the **rest** of his life **proclaiming** that **message**.

-Now, here's what I **love** about this.

-You **DON'T** have to have a **Damascus Road experience** to have your life **transformed** by Jesus.

-Not everyone **encounters Christ** the way **Saul** did.

-But **everyone** who comes to **Christ encounters** the **same Savior**.

-And that brings me to **another statement** Paul made.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

-That's what the **grace** of Jesus **does**.

-It brings **new life**.

-It gives us a **new identity**.

-And it **changes the direction** of our **lives**.

-And some of you **sitting in this room** know exactly what I'm **talking about**.

-You **remember** who you **were** before you **surrendered** your life to **Jesus**.

-And you know the **difference** He's **made**.

-Not because you somehow **managed to fix** everything about **yourself**.

-But because **Jesus Christ** has **transformed** your **life**.

-And here's what I want us to **remember**.

-The **same Jesus** who **transformed Saul's** life is still transforming lives **today**.

-Now, when we left Saul, he was sitting in Damascus.

-He was **blind**.

-He was **praying**.

-And he was **waiting** for further **instructions**.

-But while **Saul** was **waiting**, God was **preparing** another **man**.

-A disciple named **Ananias**.

-And here's why I want us to **pay attention** to this **story**.

-Ananias **knew Saul's reputation**.

-He **knew the danger** Saul **represented** to **believers**.

-And yet **Jesus** was about to **instruct him** to go directly to the man he had **every reason to fear.**

-So here's the **question** I want us to **consider** tonight.

-What happens when obedience to God challenges everything our circumstances seem to be telling us?

-Because that's where we're going to pick up the story.

-Let's turn to **Acts 9:10–16**.

WHEN FEAR MEETS FAITH

Acts 9:10–16 [10] In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. [11] The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. [12] In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." [13] "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. [14] And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." [15] But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. [16] I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

A. AN ORDINARY DISCIPLE

-Notice what **verse 10** says.

"*In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias.*"

-Luke **DOESN'T introduce** him as an **apostle**.

-He **DOESN'T identify** him as a **famous preacher**.

-He simply **calls** him a **disciple**.

-A **follower** of **Jesus**.

-And yet God was about to **involve** this **ordinary disciple** in something **extraordinary**.

-Now, notice what **happens**.

-The **Lord speaks** to Ananias in a **vision**.

-And Ananias responds: **"*Yes, Lord.*"**

-Then the **Lord tells** him to go to the **house of Judas** on **Straight Street** (Gave him the address)

-and **ask** for a man named **Saul of Tarsus**.

-And God explains that **Saul is praying** and has seen a **vision of a man named Ananias**

-I think I'd be like, ***"God, you gave him my name?"***

-God is **working** in **two** different **people's lives**.

-Saul is **praying**.

-Ananias is **receiving instructions**.

-And God is **preparing** to **bring** their **lives together**.

-But there's a **problem**.

-Ananias **knows** who **Saul** is.

B. ANANIAS HAS LEGITIMATE CONCERNS

-Now, I want you to **pay att**ention to Ananias's **response**.

"Lord, I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem."

-And then he **reminds the Lord** that Saul has **authority** to **arrest** believers in Damascus.

-Now, I have to **smile** a little when I **read** this.

-Because Ananias is **telling the Lord** something the **Lord already knows**!

-But think about what he's saying.

- ***Lord, do You know who this man is?***
- ***Do You know what he's done?***
- ***Do You know why he's here?***

-Of **course**, God **knows**.

-But Ananias has some very **legitimate concerns**.

-Saul **approved** of **Stephen's execution**.

-He **dragged believers** from their **homes**.

-He was **determined** to **destroy** the **church**.

-And now **God** is **telling** Ananias to **go find him**.

-Can you imagine what must have been going through Ananias's mind?

-Now, Scripture **DOESN'T** specifically **tell us everything** Ananias was **feeling**.

-But it certainly **gives us enough information** to understand why he was **concerned**.

-And here's where I want to **connect this story** to **James**.

-Having **legitimate concerns DOESN'T** make someone **double-minded**.

-Ananias is **NOT** necessarily **demonstrating** a **divided allegiance**.

-He's **expressing** what he **knows** about **Saul**.

-The Lord **DOESN'T rebuke** Ananias for **raising** those **concerns**.

-He **responds** by **explaining** what He **intends** to **DO** through **Saul**.

C. GOD SEES WHAT ANANIAS CANNOT SEE

-Now, look at the **Lord's response**.

"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."

-Ananias knows **Saul's past**.

-But God **reveals** something about **Saul's future**.

-Ananias knows Saul as a **PERSECUTOR**.

-But **God has chosen** Saul to become a **PROCLAIMER of the gospel**.

-Ananias knows what Saul has done **AGAINST the church**.

-But God knows what Saul will do **for the SAKE of Christ**.

-Ananias **knew** what **Saul had done**.

-But only God **knew** what **Saul would become.**

-Now, notice something important.

-God **DOESN'T** tell Ananias that **Saul's past** was **harmless**.

-He **DOESN'T pretend** the **persecution NEVER happened**.

-And He **DOESN'T promise** that **following Jesus** will be **easy** for Saul.

-In fact, verse 16 says: ***"I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."***

-But God had a **purpose** for **Saul's life** that Ananias could **NOT** have **anticipated**.

-And this is where I want us to think about what we've learned from James.

D. TRUSTING GOD WHEN WE DON'T SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE

-Remember what **James told us** in verse 5.

-When we **lack wisdom**, we should **ask God**.

-And in **verse 6,** he tells us to **ask in faith**.

-Then in **verses 7 and 8**, he **warns** against a **divided heart**.

-Now, Ananias **gives us a picture** of someone **facing** a **difficult situation**.

-He knows the **danger**, has **questions**, and **legit concerns**.

-But he's also **receiving direction** from the Lord.

-And here's the **question**.

-Will Ananias allow Saul's reputation to become more authoritative than the Lord's instruction?

-Ananias received a **specific instruction** from **Jesus** in a **vision**.

-And James **DOESN'T promise** that every time we **ask for wisdom**, God will give us that **same experience**.

-But the **principle of trusting** God's **character** remains **important**.

-Because sometimes **obedience requires** us to **move forward** without **understanding** everything.

-And sometimes our **circumstances** give us **plenty of reasons** to be **afraid**.

-**Faith** is **NOT** always the **absence of fear**.

-Sometimes **faith is demonstrated** by **obedience** in the **presence of fear**.

-And that's what makes **Ananias's story** so **meaningful** to me.

-God was **inviting** him to **participate** in something much **bigger** than he **understood**.

E. WHEN FAITH BECOMES OBEDIENCE

Acts 9:17–19 [17] Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [18] Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, [19] and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

-Now, I want you to notice how **verse 17 begins**.

"*Then Ananias went to the house and entered it.*"

-**Remember** everything we've just **discussed**.

-Ananias **knew** Saul's **reputation**.

-He knew Saul had **persecuted believers**.

-He knew Saul had **come** to **Damascus** with authority to **arrest** Christians.

-And he had every **reason** to be **concerned**.

-But when **Jesus told** him to **go**...

-Ananias went.

-Now, that's **important**.

-Because Ananias **DIDN'T** have all his questions answered.

-He **DIDN'T** know **everything** that was going to **happen**.

-But he **knew WHO** had **given** him the **instructions**.

-And he **chose** to **obey**.

-Remember what we learned in **James 1:5–8**.

-Faith **ISN'T** the absence of **questions**.

-And faith **ISN'T** the absence of **fear**.

-Sometimes **faith** is **demonstrated** by **obedience** in the **presence** of **fear**.

-But there's something else in this **passage** that I find **remarkable**.

-Look at what **Ananias says** when he **approaches Saul**.

"*Brother Saul.*"

-Think about those **two words**.

-This is the **man** who had been **persecuting the church**.

-This is the **man** who had been **dragging believers** from their **homes**.

-And this is the **man** Ananias had **every reason** to **fear**.

-But he **DOESN'T** greet him as an **enemy**.

-He **calls** him **BROTHER**.

-Now, Scripture **DOESN'T** tell us everything Ananias was **thinking** or **feeling** at that **moment**.

-But his **words reveal** that he was **willing** to **receive Saul** as someone Jesus had **claimed** for Himself.

-And I think that's a **beautiful picture** of what the **grace** of **Jesus** can do.

-The man who **once persecuted** the **family of God** was now being **welcomed** as a **brother**.

-And **pay attention** what happens **next**.

-Ananias **places** his **hands** on Saul.

-He tells him that **Jesus sent him** so Saul could **regain his sight** and be **filled** with the **Holy Spirit**.

-**Immediately**, something like **scales** fall from Saul's eyes.

-He can **see again**.

-He **gets up** and is **baptized**.

-And after **eating**, he **regains** his **strength**.

-Now, **consider** everything that has **happened**.

-Saul **encountered** the **risen Jesus** on the **road**.

-God **prepared** Ananias to **minister** to him.

-Ananias **obeyed**, despite his **concerns**.

-And now Saul is **being received** into the very **community** he had been **trying to destroy**.

-But I want to **bring us back** to something we've been **studying** in **James**.

-Ananias was **NOT responsible** for **transforming Saul's life**. **JESUS WAS.**

-Ananias was **responsible** for **obeying** the **Lord**.

-And **because** he obeyed, he had the **privilege** of **participating** in what **God was doing**.

-Now, here's a **question worth** asking ourselves.

-What opportunities to participate in God's work might we miss because we're unwilling to obey when we're uncomfortable?

-We may **NOT understand** everything **God is doing**.

-We may have **legitimate concerns**.

-But when God has made **His will clear**…

-The question becomes whether we're **willing to trust Him** enough to **obey**.

F. ANANIAS THROUGH THE EYES OF PAUL

-Now, before we **leave** the story of **Ananias**, I want to take you to **one more passage**.

-Because **years later**, Paul would **share his testimony** about what happened on the **road to Damascus.**

-And in **Acts 22**, he gives us some **additional details** about Ananias.

-Remember, this is **Paul speaking** about the man **God sent** to **minister** to him.

ACTS 22:12–16 [12] "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. [13] He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him. [14] "Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. [15] You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. [16] And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

-Now, there are **several things** I want you to **notice**.

1. THE CHARACTER OF ANANIAS (VERSE 12)

-Paul describes Ananias as a **devout observer of the law** who was **highly respected** by the **Jews living** in **Damascus**.

-Now, remember how **Luke introduced** him in **Acts 9**.

-He simply called him a **disciple**.

-But here we **learn** that Ananias was a man of **devotion** and **integrity**.

-He had a **reputation** among the **Jewish community**.

-God chose this **respected disciple** to minister to the very **man** who had come to Damascus to **arrest followers of Jesus**.

2. ANANIAS RECOGNIZED GOD'S PURPOSE FOR SAUL (VERSES 13–15)

-In verse 13, Ananias tells Saul to **receive his sight**.

-And Saul **immediately sees** him.

-But then Ananias says something **remarkable**.

-In verse 14, he tells Saul that the **God** of their **ancestors** had **chosen him** to know **His will**,

-to **see** the **Righteous One**, and to **hear words** from His **mouth**.

-And in verse 15, he tells Saul that he will be **His witness to all people** concerning what he has seen and heard.

-Now, remember what Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**.

-That His **followers** would be His **witnesses** in **Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth**.

-And here stands Saul.

-The **man** who had been **trying to stop** the spread of **Christianity**.

-Now being **told** that God had **chosen** him to become a **witness** for Jesus Christ.

-The **persecutor** was becoming a **proclaimer**.

-And Ananias had the **privilege** of being **part** of that moment.

3. ANANIAS CALLED SAUL TO RESPOND (VERSE 16)

-Now, **notice** what **Ananias says** in verse 16.

ACTS 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

-Now, there's something about this verse that I find **remarkable**.

-Remember why Saul originally traveled to Damascus?

-He came with the **authority** to **arrest** those who **called** on the **name of Jesus**.

-That's exactly what **Ananias** said in **Acts 9:14**.

-But now, look at what **Ananias is encouraging** Saul to do.

-Call on the name of Jesus!

-The man who had been **persecuting those** who **called** on **Jesus**...

-Was now **being invited** to **call on Jesus himself**.

-And years later, this **same man** would **write** these words to **the church in Rome.**

ROMANS 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

-And then, just a few verses later, Paul says:

ROMANS 10:13 Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

-Do you see the transformation?

-The **name Saul** once **opposed** became the **name** he **spent the rest** of his **life proclaiming**.

-And **Ananias** also **encouraged** Saul to be **baptized**.

-Now, remember, Saul had already **encountered** the **risen Jesus** on the **road to Damascus**.

-And **baptism** would become an important **step** of **obedience**,

-**Publicly identifying** him with the very **Savior** he had been **persecuting**.

-And that brings me to something I want to **share** with you **tonight**.

A PERSONAL RESPONSE — WATER BAPTISM

-On **November 22nd**, we're going to be **celebrating water baptism** during our **services**.

-And I love what **baptism represents**.

-It's a **public declaration** that **Jesus Christ** has **changed** our **lives**.

-It's a **beautiful picture** of the **new life** we **have in Him**.

-And maybe there's **someone here tonight** who has **surrendered your life to Jesus**...

-But you've **NEVER** taken that step of **water baptism**.

-I want to **encourage** you to **consider** what we've been **studying**.

-We've spent the **last several weeks** talking about **trusting God**

-and **responding** in **obedience**.

-And **baptism** is one of the ways we **publicly express** that **obedience** to **Christ**.

-So, let me ask you something.

-If Jesus has transformed your life, have you publicly identified yourself as one of His followers?

-If you **HAVEN'T** been **baptized** since placing your **faith in Christ**,

-I'd **love** for you to be **part of our baptism service** on **November 22nd**.

AN ORDINARY DISCIPLE WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT

-Now, here's what I find so **meaningful** about this story.

-When we **read the rest** of **the New Testament**, we see the extraordinary ways **God used Paul**.

- He **preached the gospel** throughout the **Roman** world.
- He **planted churches**.
- He **discipled believers**.
- And God used him to **write letters** that continue **teaching** the church today.

-But I want you to **remember** something.

-**Before Paul** became the **missionary** we know,

-God sent an **ordinary disciple** named Ananias to **minister** to him.

-Ananias **DIDN'T** know everything **God** would **accomplish** through **Saul**.

-He simply **knew** that **Jesus** had **told** him to **go**.

-And he **obeyed**.

-Now, think about the **significance** of that.

-We may **NEVER know** the full **impact** of our **obedience**.

-We may **NEVER** see everything **God accomplishes** through the people we **encourage**, **disciple**, or **minister** to.

-But that **DOESN'T** make our **obedience insignificant**.

-And here's where I want to **bring us back** to **James**.

-Ananias had **legitimate concerns**, but he **DIDN'T** allow those concerns to **become greater** than his **allegiance** to **Christ**.

-He **trusted** the **Lord** enough to **obey**.

-And through that **obedience**, he **participated** in something **far greater** than he could have **imagined**.

-Sometimes the **significance** of our **obedience ISN'T** measured by **what we can see**,

-but by what **God is doing beyond** our **understanding**.

G. WHEN JESUS CHANGES WHAT WE VALUE

-Now, before we **finish tonight**, I want to show you **one more passage**.

-Because we've spent **considerable time** looking at how **Saul's encounter** with Jesus **transformed his life**.

-But I want you to **understand** that Jesus **DIDN'T** simply change **Saul's BEHAVIOR.**

-He **changed** what Saul **considered valuable**.

PHILIPPIANS 3:4–8 If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: [5] circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; [6] as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. [7] But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. [8] What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

-Now, notice what Paul is **describing**.

-Before **encountering Jesus**, Saul had an **impressive religious résumé**.

- He was **circumcised** on the **eighth day.**
- He was from the **tribe of Benjamin**.
- He was a **Pharisee**.
- He was **zealous** for his **religious convictions**.

-And he had been so **committed** to those **convictions** that he **persecuted the church**.

-In the **eyes** of many **people**, Saul had **everything going** for him.

-But then he **encountered Jesus Christ**.

-And listen to what he says in **verse 7.**

Philippians 3:7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

-The **things** Saul once **considered** his **greatest advantages**…

-He now **viewed differently** because of **Jesus**.

-And in verse 8, Paul says that **knowing Christ Jesus** his Lord is of **surpassing worth**.

-Now, here's what I want you to **understand**.

-When Jesus **transforms our lives**, He also **transforms what we value**.

-Our **identity** is **NO** longer **determined** by our **accomplishments**.

-Our **security** is **NO** longer found in our **position** or **possessions**.

-And our **greatest treasure** becomes **knowing Jesus Christ**.

BRINGING IT BACK TO JAMES

-Now, I want you to **remember something**.

-James is **writing to believers** who have experienced **trials, persecution,** and **displacement**.

-Some of these **believers** were **living** in very **difficult circumstances**.

-And as we move into the **next section** of his letter, James begins **addressing** something **interesting**.

-How should followers of Jesus understand their position in life?

-Listen to what he says in **James 1:9–11**.

9 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. 10 But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. **-Now, we're going to spend more time examining these verses next week.**

-But notice the **contrast** James **introduces**.

-He **speaks** about **believers** in **humble circumstances**.

-And then he **speaks** about those who are **rich**.

-And he **reminds** us that **earthly wealth** and **position** are **temporary**.

-Our **circumstances** may **change**.

-Our **possessions** may **disappear**.

-Our **position** in **society** may **rise** or **fall**.

-But our **identity** in **Christ** is something entirely **different**.

-And I think **Paul's testimony** gives us a **beautiful illustration** of that **truth**.

-The things **Saul once considered valuable** became **secondary** to the surpassing **worth** of **knowing Jesus Christ**.

-So, here's the **question** I want to **leave you** with **tonight**.

-What do I consider most valuable in my life, and has knowing Jesus changed that?

-Because **following Jesus ISN'T** simply about **changing** what we **do**.

-It's about **allowing Him** to **transform** who we **ARE**, whom we **TRUST**, and what we **TREASURE**.