

FAITH THAT WORKS — INTRODUCTION

James 1:1

-Tonight, we're beginning a **brand-new study** through the **book of James** that we're calling **Faith That Works**.

-But we're not going to get very **far**.

-In fact, our **Scripture for tonight** is just one verse, **James 1:1**.

-And that's **intentional**.

-When we **studied** the book of **Galatians** together, we took nearly **two years to work through six chapters**.

-Some of you might **hear** that and think: *How in the world can it take **two years to study six chapters of the Bible**?*

-The **answer** is because we're not trying to simply **get through the Bible**.

-We want the Bible to get through us.

EXEGETICAL STUDY

-What we're doing is called an **exegetical study**.

-**Exegesis** is the process of drawing the **true meaning out** of a text based on its **original context**.

-The opposite would be **eisegesis** which is the **error** of reading one's own **personal ideas or biases** into a text.

Eisegesis vs Exegesis.

-A **scriptural example** used to demonstrate this difference is **Philippians 4:13**: "***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***"

-The Eisegesis Approach (Reading Into the Text)

-A reader approaches this verse with a **modern, individualistic mindset** focused on **personal ambition**.

-In fact, you'll see this **eisegetical interpretation** in many **sporting activities**.

- **The Interpretation:** "If I believe in Christ, I can **achieve** any **physical, financial, or career goal**. I can **win** this **championship game**, get this **promotion**, or **ace this exam** because Christ gives me the **power** to do whatever I **set my mind to**."
 - Maybe **practicing**, or **studying**, or **hard work** could be the answer too?

- **Why it is Eisegesis:** The reader injects a modern "**prosperity**" or "**self-help**" **philosophy** into the verse.
 - They **ignore** the **surrounding text** to make the passage **serve** their **own** immediate **desires**.

The Exegesis Approach (Drawing Out the Original Meaning)

-In this approach, a reader looks at the **historical** and **textual CONTEXT** of the letter, **examining** the **verses** right **before** it and **after**...

-If you take the "**Text**" out of "**Context**", all you have left is a "**Con**".

Philippians 4:11–12 ¹¹ *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* ¹² *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

- **The Textual Context:** Paul writes, "*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation...*"
- **The Interpretation:** Paul is **writing** from a **Roman prison**.
 - The "**all things**" he refers to are not achieving **worldly successes**...
 - but rather **enduring extreme hardship, hunger, and imprisonment**.
 - The **strength** Christ gives...is the spiritual **endurance** to be **content** even when **suffering** or facing **poverty** or...having **everything I need**!
 - NKJV (I know how to be **abased**, and I know what it means to **abound**.)
 - (Our **church** as an **example**...)
- **Why it is Exegesis:** The **conclusion** is drawn directly from Paul's **actual circumstances** and the **immediate sentences** surrounding the verse, **honoring** the **author's original intent**.

-In this type of study, we aren't **starting with something we want to say** and then looking for a Bible verse that **supports** it.

-We're **starting with Scripture** and **ASKING**:

- **What did the biblical author say?**
- **What did he mean?**
- **What did it mean to the people who first received it?**
- **And then, how does that truth apply to us today?**

-That's why sometimes we'll **spend an entire evening** on just a **few verses**.

-We're going to **pay attention to words** and look at **context**.

-Sometimes we'll look at the **original Greek**, and we will talk about **history** and **culture**.

-We'll even **compare** Scripture with other Scripture.

-And through all of it, we're going to **keep asking this question**:

"What is God SAYING through His Word, and how should it CHANGE the way we live?"

-Because Bible study isn't just about **information**...it's about **transformation**.

AN EXEGETICAL EXAMPLE OF TRANSFORMATION

Romans 12:2 Do not CONFORM to the pattern of this world but be TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

-When we **slow down** and look at the words **Paul uses**, we discover that he is talking about much more than simply **changing our behavior**.

Paul gives us two very different pictures:

- The **world** is trying to **shape (conform)** us from the **outside**.
- **God** is **transforming** us from the **inside**.

1. "Do Not Be Conformed" — *Syschēmatizō* (συσχηματίζω) soos-khay-mat-id'-zo

- **The Greek Meaning:** Paul is using a **Greek compound** of *syn* ("with") and *schema* ("outward shape, appearance, or pattern").
 - It refers to a **superficial, temporary form** that does not **reflect** a person's **true, inner reality**.
 - **J.B. Phillips** translated it: "*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.*"
- **The Exegetical Insight:** Paul using the word *Syschēmatizō* indicates that **conformity** is something the **world** is **actively** trying to **do to you** from the **outside**.
 - The use of this word implies **stopping** an **action** already in **progress**:
 - "*Stop allowing yourselves to be molded*" by the current age.
 - This is really the **picture** Paul is giving us...the **world around us** is constantly trying to **shape us**.
 - It tells us what should **matter** or what **success** looks like.
 - It tells us what we should **value** and what we should **pursue**.
 - It tells us how we should **think** or how to define **right** and **wrong**.
 - It tells us where our **Identity** comes from and what **sexuality** should look like.
 - It tells us what **marriage is** and what **family looks** like.
 - It tells us that our **feelings determine truth**.
 - It tells us that if something **makes us happy**, it must be **good**.

- It tells us who our **enemies** are and what we should **fear**.
- And tells us what we should be **ashamed of** and what we should **celebrate**.
- And if we **aren't intentional**, we can slowly begin to take on the **shape** of the **culture** around us without **even realizing it**.
- **Conformity happens** when something on the **outside** begins **determining** our **shape**.
- Paul says, **don't let that happen**.
 - Don't allow the **values** of this **age** to become the **mold** that **determines** who you are.

2. "Be Transformed" — *Metamorphoo* (μεταμορφουῖσθε) met-am-or-fo'-o

- **The Greek Meaning:** This combines *meta* ("**change**") and *morphe* ("the **essential**, permanent **inner nature** of something").
 - It's the **root word** for our English word **metamorphosis**: the biological process where a **caterpillar** changes into a **butterfly**.
 - That **isn't** simply **behavior modification**.
 - The caterpillar isn't **trying harder to act** like a butterfly.
 - **Something fundamental is changing**.
 - That's the **picture** Paul gives us of the **Christian life**.
 - **Following Jesus** isn't simply about becoming a **better version** of who we already are.
 - Jesus is **changing** who we are...from the **inside out**!
- **The Exegetical Insight:** Like the first verb, Paul is using the **Greek word *metamorphoo*** in the **passive** voice.
 - In the Greek language, the **passive voice** means that the **subject** of the **sentence** receives the **action** performed by an **outside agent**.
 - In other words, **you** (the subject) are either going to be **conformed** to the **World's** standards
 - Or you will be **transformed** by the Holy Spirit into **God's** standards.
 - . We **cooperate** with the work of God. We **participate** in it. We **surrender** to it
 - But ultimately, **you cannot transform yourself**.
 - Christianity isn't **self-help**.
 - It isn't, "**Try harder. Do better. Fix yourself.**"
 - It is the **Holy Spirit** doing a **transforming** work within us as we **surrender** ourselves to **Christ**.
- So, there are really **two forces** at work in Romans 12:2:
 - The **world** wants to **conform you**.
 - The **Spirit** wants to **transform you**.
 - The question becomes: **Which one are we allowing to shape us?**

HOW DOES THIS TRANSFORMATION HAPPEN?

-Paul tells us in Romans 12:2, “...**by the renewing of your mind.**”

-That brings us to two more important **Greek** words: **Renewing** and **Mind**.

3. “Mind” — *Nous* (νοῦς) noose

-When we hear the word **mind**, we normally think about our **thoughts or intellect**.

-But **nous** means more than simply what happens **between our ears** in our **brain**.

-It includes our **understanding**, perception, **judgment**, and desires...

-Even the way we **evaluate** and **interact** with the **world around** us.

-Think of **nous** as the **filter** through which we **see life**.

-Our mind (*nous*) helps determine:

-What do I believe?

-What do I value?

-What do I desire?

-What do I reject?

-How do I make decisions?

-Paul says that is what **God wants to change**...our **Mind**.

-This is bigger than simply **thinking** more **positive thoughts**.

-God wants to **transform** the very way we **see and understand life**.

-Because when **God changes** the way we **think**, He begins changing the way we **live**.

4. “Renewing” — *Anakainōsis* (ἀνακαίνωσις) a-na-kai-no-sis

-Paul says this **transformation** happens through the **renewing** of our minds.

-The idea here isn't simply **repairing** something that is **broken**.

-It's **making something new in quality**.

-God isn't putting a **fresh coat of paint** on our **old way** of thinking.

-He is **gutting** it and then completely **renovating** it.

-He begins replacing **old patterns** with **new** ones.

-Old values with **Kingdom** values.

-Old assumptions with **Biblical truth**.

-Old ways of viewings **ourselves, people**, and the **world** with a completely new way of **seeing**.

- And notice where the **transformation begins: The mind.**
- Because eventually, what **shapes** our **thinking shapes** our **living.**
- That is why **Biblical transformation** is more than **behavior modification.**
 - Religion** can change behavior.
 - Rules** can change behavior.
 - Pressure** can change behavior.
- But **Jesus** wants to change something **deeper.**
- He wants to transform us from the inside out.**
- The **exegetical understanding** of Romans 12:2 gives us this progression:
 - **The world pressures us toward conformity.**
 - **The Spirit works within us toward transformation.**
 - **That transformation happens through the renewing of our minds.**
- And as our **minds are renewed**, we begin to **recognize** and **live** according to **the will of God.**
- That's **transformation.**
- Not simply **doing differently...**but increasingly **becoming different.**
- And **this is why we study the Bible exegetically.**
- We don't want to simply **read a verse**, pull out something that **sounds good**, and **move on.**
- We want to slow down and ask, **"What is God actually saying here?"**
- Who **wrote** it? Who were they **writing** to? What was **happening** at the time?
- Why did they choose these **particular words**? What did those **words mean** to the people who first heard them?
- And then, **what does that mean for us today?**
- Because sometimes **one word** changes the way we **understand** an **entire passage.**
- Our **goal** isn't just to **get through the Bible.**
- Our **goal** is to allow the **Bible** to **get into us.**
- We **DON'T** study Scripture simply so that we can **know more about the Bible.**
- We study Scripture because we want the **Word of God...**through the **work of the Holy Spirit,**
- To **transform us** into people who **look more like Jesus.**

-That's why we spent **two years** walking through **six chapters** of Galatians.

JAMES

-I just want you to understand **up front**, this is why we're going to **take our time** with James.

-We aren't in a **hurry**.

-We want to **understand** what James **said** and what James **meant**.

-And we **especially want to know** how the Holy Spirit wants to **use** these words **today**.

-Because **James** is going to **challenge** us.

-He's going to talk about **trials. Temptation. Anger.**

-James will address our **words**. How we **treat** people.

-**Money**. Pride. **Conflict**. Prayer.

-He's going to **challenge** us with **SAYING we believe something** and **LIVING like we believe it**.

-That's why we're calling this study: **FAITH THAT WORKS**

-**NOT** because our **works save us**.

-But because **genuine** faith **does something**.

-Real faith eventually becomes **visible** in **real life**.

30,000 FEET

-So, before we start taking **James apart verse by verse**, tonight we're going to back up to about **30,000 feet** and look at the whole thing.

-Think about looking out the **window of an airplane**.

-From **30,000 feet**, you can't see every **house**.

-You can't see every **road sign**.

-You can't see all the **details**.

-But you can see the **landscape**.

-You can see where the **mountains** are.

-You can see the **rivers** and the **roads**.

-You can see where the **cities** are located and how **everything fits together**.

-When flying over **Kansas**, I love seeing the **irrigation circles**!

-Before we examine individual **words** and **verses**, I want us to see the **landscape**.

- **Who is James?**
- **Who was he writing to?**
- **When did he write it?**
- **What was happening historically?**
- **Why did he write it?**
- **And what are the major themes we're going to encounter as we work our way through these five chapters?**

-Because when we understand the **WORLD behind the text**, it helps us better understand the **MEANING of the text**.

-I promise, we'll eventually start **bringing the plane down** for a **closer** look.

-But there's **one verse** I want us to use as our **starting point** tonight:

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

-There is an **incredible amount** of **information** packed into that **one little verse**.

-And the **first question** it raises is the **obvious** one:

WHO IS JAMES?

-Before we can understand the **book of James**, we need to **meet the man** who wrote it.

-And James has one of the more **fascinating stories** in the New Testament because **his story** is really a story of **transformation**.

-And the cool part is we can **trace** it through **Scripture**:

- **James the Brother**
- **James the Skeptic**
- **James meets the Resurrected Jesus**
- **James the Believer**
- **James the Leader**
- **James the Martyr**

A. JAMES THE BROTHER

Matthew 13:54–56 ⁵⁴ ***Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.*** ⁵⁵ ***"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't***

his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

-James was the **half-brother of Jesus**, a son of Mary and Joseph, while Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

-Mark 6:3 gives essentially the **same list** and **names James** first among **Jesus' brothers...**

-Which **may suggest** James was the **oldest** of Jesus' younger brothers.

Mark 6:3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"

-Here's what I **love** about these passages...it means James **grew up with Jesus**.

-Just **think** about that for a moment.

-He **ate** at the same **table**.

-He **lived** in the same **house**.

-He knew **Mary** as his **mother**.

-He knew **Joseph** as his **father**.

-He knew Jesus as his older brother.

-For approximately **thirty years**, James had a **perspective of Jesus** that almost nobody else had.

-And yet **familiarity** with Jesus did not **automatically produce faith** in Jesus.

-That's where his story gets **interesting**.

B. JAMES THE SKEPTIC

John 7:3–5 ¹ After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. ² But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

-**Jesus' brothers** tell Him: "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do."

-And then **John gives us** this remarkable **commentary**: "**For even his own brothers did not believe in him.**"

-James **grew up** with Jesus **and James didn't believe in Jesus**.

-This is worth a moment of **contemplation**...

-**Being around** Jesus isn't the same thing as **believing** in Jesus.

-**Being familiar** with the **things of God** isn't the same thing as **surrendering your life** to God.

-James had probably **heard** Jesus **teach**.

-He knew about the **miracles**.

-He knew what **people were saying** about his brother.

-But he **remained unconvinced**.

-Mark 3:20–21 gives us an even **stronger glimpse** into the family's **concern**.

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

-When Jesus' **family** heard about the **crowds surrounding** Him, they went to take **control** of the situation.

-The people were saying, "**He is out of his mind**."

-A few verses later, **Jesus' mother and brothers** arrive looking for Him (Mark 3:31–32).

³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.

³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

-So, before James became one of the **great leaders** of the early church, **he was a skeptic**.

-Which raises an obvious question: **What changed James?**

C. JAMES MEETS THE RESURRECTED JESUS

-I think this may be the **pivotal verse** in James' entire **biography**.

-In **1 Corinthians 15:3–7**, Paul lists **appearances** of the resurrected Jesus:

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

-“He appeared to **Cephas**, and then to the **Twelve**... then he appeared to **James**...”

-We aren't **told anything** about that meeting.

-I almost **wish** we were.

-What did Jesus **say**?

-Better yet in this **context**...What did **James say**?

-What was it like for James to look at the **brother** he had **grown up with**...

-The **brother** he had **doubted** and realize: **He really is the Son of God**.

-We don't know what was **said**, but we certainly know what **happened afterward**.

-James changed.

-The **resurrection** wasn't merely a **doctrine** James eventually **accepted**.

-James encountered the risen Jesus.

-And after that encounter, we **NEVER** again see James **presented in Scripture** as the **unbelieving brother**.

D. JAMES THE BELIEVER

-Now I want you to watch how quickly the **story changes**.

-After Jesus **ascends** into heaven, the disciples return to **Jerusalem**.

Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

-Do you see who is **there** now?

-His brothers.

-The brother who previously did not **believe in Him** is now **praying** with His **disciples**.

-Something happened between **John 7** and **Acts 1**.

-The **resurrection** happened.

-And James is now **among the believers**.

-There's an incredible **transformation**:

- **He knew Jesus as brother.**
- **He doubted Jesus as Messiah.**
- **He encountered Jesus resurrected.**
- **And now he worships Jesus as Lord.**

-This will make **James 1:1** much more **powerful** when we finally **return** to it.

E. JAMES THE LEADER

-James doesn't simply become a **Christian**.

-He eventually becomes one of the **most influential leaders** in the **early church**.

-When **Peter miraculously escapes prison** in Acts 12, he tells the believers:

Acts 12:17 "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

-Notice **who** is already **singled out**?

-Then we arrive at **Acts 15**, the **Jerusalem Council**.

-The early church is wrestling with a **massive theological question**:

-Do **Gentiles** have to **become Jewish** in order to become **Christians**?

-**Peter** speaks. **Paul and Barnabas** speak.

Acts 15:12-13 ¹² *The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.* ¹³ *When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me."*

-James helps **articulate** the **judgment** of the Jerusalem church.

Acts 15:19 "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

-Later, Paul describes **James' standing** even more clearly.

Galatians 2:9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

-Think about that **progression**.

-The **skeptic** has become a **pillar of the church**.

-And when Paul makes his **final recorded visit** to **Jerusalem**:

Acts 21:18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.

-By this **point** James appears to be the **recognized leader** of the **Jerusalem church**.

-That's the man **writing this letter**.

- He's a **pastor**.
- He's **shepherding** people.
- He's dealt with **church conflict**.
- He's dealt with **doctrinal controversy**.
- He's dealt with **poverty** and **persecution**.
- He's watched **believers scatter**.
- He's helped **lead the church** through some of its **earliest** and **most difficult years**.
- That **pastoral background** helps explain why the book of James is so **intensely practical**.

F. JAMES THE MARTYR

- The **New Testament** does not tell us how James **died**.
- For that, we must move **outside Scripture** into **ancient historical sources**.
- One of our most important is the **first-century Jewish historian**, by the name of **Josephus**.
- Writing near the **end** of the **first century**, Josephus describes the high priest **Ananus** bringing before the Sanhedrin:
-“the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James”
- Josephus says **James and others** were accused of **violating the law** and were **stoned to death**.
- This **occurred** during the brief transition between **Roman governors** after **Festus died** and before **Albinus** arrived, generally dated to **A.D. 62**.
- Later Christian traditions** add more **details** to James' **death**, but those **accounts** were written later and should be **treated more cautiously**.
- What we can say with **considerable historical confidence** is:
- James **died** because of the **movement centered** on the very **brother** he once **did not believe in**.
- And that makes his **story remarkable**.

WHO IS JAMES?

- JAMES THE BROTHER:** He grew up with Jesus.
- JAMES THE SKEPTIC:** He did not believe in Jesus.
- JAMES MEETS THE RISEN JESUS:** Everything changes.
- JAMES THE BELIEVER:** He joins the disciples in prayer.
- JAMES THE LEADER:** He becomes a pillar of the Jerusalem church.

F. **JAMES THE MARTYR:** He ultimately dies identified with Jesus Christ.

-Now let's **read** James 1: 1 again, but with **context**...

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

-Now that **introduction** means something entirely **different**.

-Notice what James **doesn't** say.

He doesn't say: "James, the **brother** of **Jesus Christ**."

-If anybody could have **name-dropped**, James could have.

-**Instead**, he wrote..."James, a **servant**..."

-That Greek word is **doulos (δούλος)** **doo'-los**, servant, bondservant, even slave.

-James' greatest claim wasn't: "**I grew up with Him**."

-It was: "**I belong to Him**."

-And maybe that's our **first lesson** from James before we've even made it **past his name**:

-Being **familiar with Jesus** is not the same thing as **surrendering to Jesus**.

-James had **familiarity**. He was **family**.

-Then he **encountered** the **risen** Christ.

-And **familiarity** became **faith**.

-That **faith** became **service**.

-That **service** became **leadership**.

-And that **leadership** ultimately cost him his **life**.

-Which is quite an **introduction** to a man who is about to **spend five chapters** teaching us about **Faith That Works**.