

Whosoever Will 9-20-26 Text

Good morning. We are beginning the book of James today. We have several handouts for you today. You see that you've got one that is the teaching schedule that will tell you what you are to be studying each week as we go along, and you'll find that we're going to do five chapters. We're going to do five chapters in nine lessons, so we will be splitting some of the chapters up. The second thing you have there in your handouts is you've got a bibliography. These are most of the sources that I have used in preparing this, if you want to cross-reference something. A lot of times people want to buy a commentary, they want to buy a book and do some study on their own, and I would recommend any and all of these. They are all excellent. They're all written by well-proven conservative writers. Some of them going back even into the 1800s with Charles Spurgeon, the early 1900s with Ironsides, the 40s and 50s with Dr. Weersbe.

They have all stood the test of time. The next thing you have is I call it who, what, when, where, and why. It's a breakdown about who the author was, when it was written, the setting, the purpose, some of the key verses, and we always talk about where do you see Christ represented in this book. So those are some things you can go over this week as you're mulling over what we talk about today. We've chosen the title. Trey chose the title "Behave" for this series of lessons. If you remember when we studied Matthew, the topic was seek, and then when we got to John, it was to abide, and now that we're in the book of James, it is behave. And basically, as we study through the Gospels tell us how to be saved, but when we get to James, James just tells us how to behave. What are we to do with this newfound life that we have in Christ?

Who, what, when, where, and why? There, you will realize that John James is probably the oldest book in the New Testament. Probably written somewhere around 45 A.D. The earliest gospel accounts were, of course, oral. So James may well have been the first one to put his words down in writing. The others' stories were circulating, but were not actually written down until probably many years afterwards. About 18 years after. James wrote this book. Paul wrote to a young preacher boy named Timothy, and he said this to Timothy in Second Timothy 3:16. All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man or the woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work. So Paul establishes the importance of the Scripture, the inspiration of the Scripture, the inerrancy.

Of the Scriptures here, they are here to help us find our way as we travel this Christian road. He uses the word training here in 3:16, and it's a word that implies raising a child, encouraging good behavior, good growth. The scribes and the Pharisees, as we saw in both Matthew and in John, had religion. They could only show you what was wrong with your life. They could rebuke you for bad behavior. Even as late as about 67 A.D., when Paul was penning this last letter to Timothy, the scribes and the Pharisees were still a very powerful force in Israel. They were a force to be reckoned with. They had great authority. They were highly respected, even though their religion was false. They were still teaching damnation instead of salvation.

So it's crucial that in writing, James distinguished between their false religion and the true word of God that he is presenting here. Both Peter and John also talked about false teachers if you read their writings. Paul talked about the Judaizers who wanted to mix law and grace. So false teachers have always been a problem, and Scripture is the best way to counter these false teachers. When you look at the book of James, the end is the beginning. The first thing you want to look at is James chapter 5, starting in verse 19. The Bible says this: If anyone among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

So he gives the purpose for the book right at the very end of the book. He wrote to prove that faith is essential, that works are essential, that works are an evidence of faith. They're not a way to earn your way to heaven, but they are a way to evidence that you are on your way to heaven. And he wants us to remember three things as we go down through this book. First is that God is sovereign. Even when there's crisis, even when there are storms in our lives, God is still on the throne. He is still in control. When crisis comes, we sometimes tend to doubt God's goodness. We'll talk about doubt and fear, how we tend to question God. What have I done wrong? Why did you do this to me? And his reminder is that when these doubts and fears come, He is all sufficient. God has everything we need.

He will give us His grace in all things at all times. So our study begins in chapter one, starting in verse one, and we're going to talk about the structure of the text. James says in verse one, "James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who were dispersed abroad, greetings." There are multiple Jameses in the Bible. To choose from as the author, the two most likely candidates are the disciple James, the brother of John, and the other is this James, the half brother of Jesus. James, the disciple of Jesus, had actually already been martyred by the time that this book was written, so he is not a candidate. So the only other viable candidate to have written this book is James, the half brother of Jesus. They had the same mother, but they had different.

Fathers, when you read in Matthew 13, Matthew even names this James as one of the siblings of Jesus. This James, along with his brothers and sisters, did not actually believe on Jesus during his earthly ministry. They were skeptical that he was the Messiah. They had looked for the Messiah for so long, and he was right there in their very household. They found that very hard to reconcile, and they did not believe on Jesus until after his resurrection. But after the resurrection, James's eyes were opened, his ears were opened. He heard the word of God, he understood the word of God, he believed the word of God. He became the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, that first-century church there. He became a very powerful, very influential voice in the first-century gospel. In Galatians two nine, Paul names him as a pillar of the church.

In Acts 1:14, Paul records him being. Dr. Luke records him being in the upper room. And in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul records a visit from Jesus to James. So he was a pastor, but he wrote from a shepherd's heart. One writer described him as a pastor with work-hardened hands. He understood the struggles that his sheep went through. He went

through these same struggles, and so he could identify when the part of his flock was suffering. According to Josephus, the secular historian, James was martyred around 62 A.D. When you compare this letter to a letter that he wrote after the Jerusalem Council in Acts chapter 15, you find that the wording and the style in both letters are identical. Both letters begin with greetings, and this word is only used two times in the Bible, and it's used here.

In James, and it's used in the letter that James wrote in Acts chapter 15. So all of these things combine to make it a certainty that the James who wrote this book was the half brother of Jesus. He describes himself here as a bond servant. In the Roman culture, that had a bad connotation. It meant involuntary, permanent service. It meant basically a slave. But James is using a Greek word here that kind of elevates the meaning. It implies willing service. It implies service to a master who was loved and respected, a master who was kind and was concerned about the welfare of those under his care. A very different term than the Romans were used to hearing. Then he describes who he is writing to, and he says he is writing to the twelve tribes. A very common description of the nation of Israel, one named for each of the children of Jacob.

After Solomon's death, there was civil war in Israel, and it ultimately broke the nation in half. There was a larger northern kingdom made up of ten tribes, and a much smaller kingdom made up of only two tribes. The southern tribes remained in Palestine. The northern tribes were ultimately carried away by the Assyrians to the north, and pretty much assimilated into their way of life. But there were some from the northern kingdom that were able to escape. And they filtered south to Judah and began reuniting with the Jews that were already down there. So there were possibly portions of all twelve tribes being represented in Jerusalem and in Judea at the time that James is writing this. But he's also writing to those who have been scattered. All the tribal records were destroyed during the Babylonian captivity.

It is impossible to specifically say, "Well, I am of this tribe or I am of that tribe." After the Babylonian captivity, temple records were kept again, but those were destroyed in 70 AD when the Romans took over. It is very difficult for any Jew to concretely prove which tribe they are from. The prophets wrote about a day, and it's a day that's yet to come; it hasn't happened yet. When the entire nation will be reunited, Jeremiah wrote about this in Jeremiah chapter 30 that God would bring his people together from all the four corners of the earth. James uses the word here, describing these tribes and their members as dispersed. The Jews call them the Jews of the dispersion, the diaspora. They have been scattered because of persecution. Persecution of the Jews began basically in Genesis chapter 21 when Ishmael mocked Isaac, and it's gone on and on as late as the first century.

After the death of Stephen, when he was stoned to death around probably 35 A.D. Very shortly after the crucifixion, the persecution increased greatly, and so many of the Jews fled and were living among the Gentiles. So James is writing to encourage these Jews that have been scattered. We're looking at possibly about 12 years, 12 to 15 years after the crucifixion, so they have had time to be scattered literally to the four corners of the earth. So hopefully, this letter is going to be distributed to many people in many places.

Verse two, he jumps right in with his message. Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials. Consider it. The word means to count, to reckon, to evaluate, to make a very hard decision. James is telling them to make a theological decision, not an emotional decision. Think with your heart.

Not with your head. Consider the facts. The trials are inescapable. They are going to come. But live out your faith for all to see. When those trials come, let that be the time when your faith shines and let others wonder how you can have such hope in such difficult times. He uses the word joy here. Count it all joy. It is a word that means contentment. It means confidence, but it also means a confidence, a contentment that's based on your faith. And it is not based on the circumstances. It is based on what you believe and what you hold true to be in your heart. Joy here is not happiness. It is a gift that comes from God. It is planted deep within your heart. You cannot create joy. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit. To say I am joyful with a frown on your face, a scowl on your face, is not a good Christian message. Glum is a terrible witness to the world.

For a Christian, one writer has said there is nothing worse than an old bitter Christian, and he goes on to describe them. He says everybody has seen them. They're those people that have more skin than they have body. These are not good witnesses for our Lord and Savior. He says emotions are essential. We all have them. We all use them, but he says don't let your emotions define who you are. One writer described emotions as being like warning lights. On the dashboard of your car, the warning lights cannot drive the car for you, but they are there to help you drive the car. You cannot operate without them. He says, "When, not if, when trials come, the testing of our faith is a given for the believer." Remember, Satan hates God. He hates Jesus. He hates the Holy Spirit. He hates us, God's kids. Trials are inevitable, and when they do come.

Our outlook determines the outcome. How you address it, how you approach it, is going to determine what the results will be. He uses the word "encounter" here. When you encounter these trials, that implies something unexpected that suddenly pops up. It surrounds you. It basically traps you in a circumstance that you did not see coming. It is an unforeseen event. He uses the word "trials" here. Interesting word. The word actually means pirate. It is not the happy Jack Sparrow, pirates of the Caribbean type. It is the mean kind. It is the one who grabs your life and turns it upside down. It steals your joy. Trials are to be an exception in our lives, not the rule. We are not supposed to live in trials all the time. But any circumstance that tests our faith is, of course, a trial. It is going to trouble us, and it is going to make us stop and do a lot of thinkings.

This is a new message for James' readers because remember, this is still early in the gospel story. They have heard the story of Jesus and his earthly ministry, but now James is giving them the practical side of how to live out this new faith that you have. So this idea of trials and testings and tribulations is really a new message. It's one that they have not used to hearing. It's a new, a fresh take on things. It's kind of an aha moment. For these new believers, I never thought about it that way. So that's what that means. Verse three: Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in

nothing. First of all, he says, no, this is nothing new. You have experienced this before. Before you were saved, you had trials and tribulations. You still have them.

But now there is a new approach. There is a new reaction when these trials and tribulations come your way. Know that these things are going to happen, but know that God gives you the resources to deal with them. God is faithful. He is true, and believe it or not, He's always in control. He's like a good parent. He gives his children space to fail. He gives his children space to have problems. One writer says that it's like a toddler learning to walk. That if you don't pick them up every time they fall, eventually they're going to learn to pick themselves up. And so that's what God does. God gives us both grace and space. Grace is His unmerited favor. It is a gift from Him. We cannot earn it. We cannot buy it. It is a free gift from God. But He also gives us space. Space comes when He doesn't intervene when we think He should.

When he doesn't intervene, how we think he should—that's when grace kicks in. We have to believe truly that God is in control and He knows what He's doing, and ultimately it's going to be for our good. Sometimes when these trials and tribulations come, we play a mental game. We start off with, "But I followed Jesus. I've given Him my heart and my life. Why did this happen? What did I do wrong?" Did I not believe enough? Was my faith not strong enough? And now this trial has come upon me. And then God has to treat us like a little child, like a kid. He's going to have to get our attention, and he's going to have to say, "Come over here and snuggle with me for just a little while. You can go outside and play later." So the choice is ours. We can either keep asking why.

Or we can sit quietly with God and get to know Him better. Get to see what is happening. What am I going to do about it? And it's an important thing to remember this idea of snuggling with God and doing it frequently because trials are going to come. The inevitable thing is that if you're not in the midst of one right now, there's one looming on the horizon waiting for you. He uses the word endurance here, describing how we should react. It means steadfastness. It implies how we behave when we're under pressure. The implication is you don't just grit your teeth and bear it; that you have unwavering faith, and that faith will build and make you more spiritually strong, more able to deal with these tests when they come your way. He says the goal is that we should be perfect.

That's something that's never going to happen in this life. We are never going to be sinless and perfect. But he's using a word here that means maturity. They are there to help us grow, to become more mature Christians, to become better able to handle diverse situations when they come along. And the goal of it is that as we become more mature, we won't become sinless, but we ought to have the ability to sin less. He says it will make you complete. It's actually the word "totelestai." We studied that in both Matthew and in John. It is what Jesus said on the cross. It is finished. It is paid in full. It cannot be changed in any ways. Complete is the moment when all the puzzle pieces come together. You know that it's impossible to put a puzzle together from the back sides. You've got to have the front side to do it. Unfortunately, most of our lives we're on

the back side of the puzzle, and God's looking at the top where He sees the completed product.

See, he's saying God doesn't want us to waste these trials that come into our lives. They should be learning experiences. They should help us to grow. They should help us to mature. They should make us more complete in our faith with Him. So the bottom line here is that suffering, with endurance added to it, is going to grow character. Verse five. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. Who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. He uses the word wisdom. The writer of the Proverbs used wisdom many, many, many times. He says that wisdom is the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. That's Proverbs nine, ten. Wisdom is to see life from God's point of view, to see that completed picture, to see where this is going.

It is to seek His will for our lives, but it's also that we will act in accordance with that will. Once God has revealed His will to us, we will be willing to act in accordance with that will. The Bible teaches us that there is no wisdom outside of God. He always gives us what we need exactly when we need it, not too early, not too late. When trials come, and they always will, He says we are to ask. The questions could be: What is God trying to teach me here? How should I respond in this situation? What in my life needs to change that might prevent this from happening again? So He says the word 'ask' it means if you need something, ask God. Go to the source. We all have friends. We all have people we rely on their judgment. But nobody loves us like Jesus does, and no one has the answers.

To our questions, like Jesus does, He already knows what we need. A lot of times, before we know it, but He wants to make sure we do. That's why prayer is so important. That's why confession is important. He knows what we did. He wants to make sure we know we did something wrong. It is our communication with God. He isn't going to just drop something in your lap without a purpose, without a growth moment. Growth and wisdom are a process, and until we die or He comes for us, we're going to have to continue to grow and mature as Christians. And He says here that we are to ask, and it is that favorite thing in the Bible, the ongoing tense. Our request should not just be that He remove the trial, or that He explain the trial, but it should be that He would give us godly wisdom to endure the trial.

To learn something from the trial, to walk through the trial with him, that it is an ongoing process. We will be doing this for the rest of our earthly lives. We will be asking, and we will be growing. He says, 'God gives generously.' The word means honest, dependent. Prayer never wearies God. Paul says that we are to pray without ceasing. First Thessalonians five seventeen, and he says that we pray. When you come to God openly seeking an answer, when you come to God, basically it's your wit's end. When you come to God, when you have nowhere else to turn, He's never going to turn you away. He is never going to say, 'Oh no, not you again.' He is never going to say, 'Well, I told you so.' He approaches it without reproach. He wants to hear from us. Verse six.

But he, us, we must ask in faith, without any doubting. For the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven by the wind and waves of the sea. The sentence ends with a function word. For that person ought not to expect anything from the Lord, being a

double-minded man. The double-minded man is a kind of unstable or untrustworthy person. It's something that appears several times in the text. So he says, 'How do we ask when we go to God with a question, with a problem, with a desire?' The answer is to combine short sentences into fluid ones. The answer is, we ask believing. Doubt is a favorite tool of Satan's. He wants to create doubt. Do you know what the answer is? I think this is an example of a sentence that needs to be combined. Do you know what the very first words that Satan said that are recorded in the Bible? His very first words were, 'Did God really say to Eve?' He planted that seed of doubt.

Did God really mean you were going to die? Doubt has been His favorite tool since Genesis chapter three, since the Garden of Eden. But He says we are to pray, believing God is in control. Pray, believing God will eventually send an answer. If you don't believe there's an answer coming, why are you even praying? James is saying here that we need to pray believing. Then he talks about this double-minded man. He says he is an unstable person who reacts when under pressure. He flies off at the handle. One writer says it means a person with one foot in heaven and one foot in the world. They have divided loyalties. They are trying to live in the world and for the world, but on their way to heaven. Doubt washes over this person like sea waves, relentless.

Endless, it never stops. Doubt is waiting around every corner. Did you ever try to stand in the surf when the sea is pulling the sand out from under you? That's the way this person is, unstable in every way. But he says we as Christians are to be anchored. So the question is, are you anchored or are you adrift? Are you that unstable person, or are you firmly grounded in God? God wants. God, do you want God's wisdom? But without seeking it or without doing God's will, do you want relief from a trial that has now come your way, but you're unwilling to learn anything from it? Do you want God's help, but you're unwilling to give up anything in order to get it? You're unwilling to change your life or your style or your thoughts or your attitudes. That all of these things are part of this idea of being anchored. That sometimes we have to give something up. Sometimes God has to teach us a lesson.

Before we can move on, verse 9, he goes on and says, 'Now the brother or sister of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position, but the rich person is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat, withers the grass, its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed. So that the rich person also, in the midst of his pursuits, will die out.'

The lesson here is God is no respecter of persons. He gives a word of encouragement to the humble. He gives a word of warning to those who are not paying attention. The wealthy, to the proud, to the haughty. He gives a blessing for the persevering, and he gives a promise to those who love Him. When God looks at us, He doesn't see our physical appearance. He doesn't see our wealth, our poverty, our cleanliness, our dirtiness, physically.

He looks at our heart. What is in the heart? What do we believe? What are we storing up in heaven? He says the rich and the poor both need spiritual resources. Your money cannot buy you anything. Your lack of money cannot buy you anything. In times of trouble, money or lack of it is not going to get you through the trial. In most situations,

the world is built on a ranking system. We'd call it a pecking order. But the gospel inverted that system. God says the last, the least, are always going to be first. When you look back over the Old Testament, when God was choosing the leadership for His people, He always chose the least, the most unlikely, the youngest, never the firstborn. Always chose the one that you and I would have never chosen. The least and the last shall always be first in God's kingdom. He says there is a glory.

In lowliness, and he says, "Remember, the rich tend to rely on their money to get them through a situation. They tend to trust in created things, not the one who created those things, not the one who gave them life and wealth." But he says also, "All things are transient. Everything is eventually going to go away. It's going to tarnish. It's going to burn up. It's going to fade away. Even the rich person is eventually going to die out." His great wealth will not buy him immortality. This stuff that we've all decided together is going to linger long after we're gone. Remember the rich fool in Luke chapter 12 that built the many barns to house all of his wealth, and what happened? He died the day the barns were finished. When we're in the midst of a storm, our immediate thought is, "What did I do to cause this?"

But that isn't always the case. Rarely is that ever the case. Do you remember in Matthew 14, we talked about the story of Peter and the boys out on the lake in the middle of the storm, and the storm came and they were terrified. The question is, how did they get into that storm? Jesus knew it was coming. Jesus planned that storm, but He sent them off alone. You have to look at Matthew, chapter 14, verse 22. They have completed the Sermon on the Mount. They have completed their ministry in that area. They're going out onto the Sea of Galilee. So they have finished. He is dismissing them, and he says, immediately afterward, he compelled the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side. They were in the storm because they obeyed Jesus. It was their obedience, not their disobedience, that got them into it.

Why did Jesus put them in the storm after they've just had this mountaintop experience of miracles and teaching on the land, and all of a sudden now they're in this storm that God created and God commanded them to go out into? He was teaching them a lesson. He was teaching them to weather the storm with Him, to instead of watching it from the shore, be in the midst of it and see. What the end result is going to be, and the end result was recorded in Matthew chapter fourteen, verse thirteen, verse thirty-three. And those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "You are truly God's son." So he compelled them into the boat. He saved them from the storm, and they worshipped him. Doctor Harry Ironside says, "To know and not do is to know nothing."

If they had not obeyed Jesus, they would not have had this worship experience. Verse twelve: Blessed is the man who perseveres under trials, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. In verse four, James promised that the one who perseveres, the one who outlasts, will be perfect and will be complete. It means mature. It means finished. It means lacking in nothing. Here he says, we are promised the crown of life. What is the crown of life? For the Christian, it is the concept of the reward of eternal life. It's given to

those believers who persevere, those who go through the trials, the temptations, and the persecutions. It means that there is a reward on the other side.

First of all, we have eternal life, the greatest reward of all. But then, as we have persevered, as we have learned through these trials and temptations, as we have used these experiences to help and benefit others, then we are earning more crowns in heaven. And in Revelation 2:10, Jesus repeats this same promise about the crown of life to those who persevere. What does persevere exactly mean? It means going from crushing doubt from just overwhelming tribulation, you don't know which way to turn. But it means turning from that into victorious joy. Remember the Sermon on the Mount over and over. It was blessed, blessed, blessed. The word actually means joyful, joyful, joyful. True happiness. So perseverance brings about true happiness. Verse thirteen. No one is to say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted.'

By God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. So temptation is not God's fault; it is our fault. We would call it the blame game. We are very quick to blame God when our trials and tribulations come. Why did God do this to me? We're quick to blame somebody else. It wasn't my fault. I didn't do it. They started it. He says here when you are tempted. In other places of the book of James, he uses the same word to mean trials. So the question is, when trials, when temptations come our way, how do we react? Do we blame God? Do we see it as we're being punished for some great transgression that we had?

Or do we do what he said in the beginning of the book to rejoice when it happens? Rejoice that basically we were considered worthy. That God thought we could learn something from this testing. The choice is up to you whether you're going to get more bitter or you're going to get better from what happens. And remember, God does not entice us to sin. He does not tempt us. That is a tool of Satan. God will never send our way any more trials than we can handle. And remember also that when we are in the midst of the storm, He is there to hold our hand every step of the way. We talk about the valley of the shadow of death. That one day He'll take our hand. He'll even walk us through that. He says, "Don't get carried away. It is enticed. It's actually a word that comes from hunting and fishing. It means to bait a trap, to put a worm on a hook, to dangle a shiny object in front of us that distracts us."

And this is one of Satan's favorite tricks. He knows our hearts, he knows our lusts better than we do, and he knows what to dangle in front of us that we will fall for it every time. So don't let Satan carry you away with his shiny objects. He talks about his own here. Everyone's downfall is different. What tempts you may not tempt me, but Satan knows our weaknesses. He knows our frailties. He knows exactly what to dangle. And their end result is always the same. We sin. We fall short of the glory of God, just like Paul wrote about in Romans chapter three. We fall short of all that God wanted us to be, all that God created us to be. Verse fifteen, he continues on with this sin idea. He says, 'And then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth.'

Death. The wages of sin is death. We've learned that from the early days of our Christian lives. He says here, conceived. The idea is that sin is like a process. It's like conception, birth, and growth. We have a desire. It leads to a sin. That sin is ultimately going to lead to death. Consider Eve in the garden. She looked. She lusted. She ate. She shared. She died spiritually, and she did it all of her own free will. Satan came with a shiny object, a shiny piece of forbidden fruit, and she went right in, just as Satan had hoped she would. And basically, all of mankind has suffered ever since because of her sin. And it's very easy to say, "Well, Adam and Eve caused all of this," but remember.

If we had been there instead of Adam and Eve, we would have done exactly the same thing. Mankind never changes. That's why the law had to come into existence. The law had to prove we could not keep it because man cannot change. There is a preacher, a young man in North Atlanta. Actually, in our class, we have him on our prayer list. He's planting a new church in about two weeks. He has an example that he likes to use, a very graphic example. He comes into the pulpit with three things. He brings in a bowling ball, a BB, and a glass window. He throws the BB at the window, and as you can imagine, it bounces off. Next, he throws the bowling ball at the window, and it, of course, shatters. And his moral is: the BB is like a sin. Unattended, it grows into a bowling ball, and look at the damage.

That it can do. Verse 16. Do not be deceived, my brother, my beloved brothers and sisters. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will, He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits among His creatures. God is the source of everything good. We don't doubt that He is unchanging. He has always been good. He always will be good. The Bible says Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That's Hebrews thirteen eight. They simply do not change. The word means shifting, fading, eclipsing of heavenly bodies, unlike the sun or the moon, which never changes. They are seasonless.

And God's character is like that. The sun and the moon are totally reliable, ever unchanging, and God is the same way. The King James version and the hymn writer both called it "no shadow of turning," since God created light, since He is the source of all light, His light never changes. We will never outgrow the gospel. We will never learn it all, but we have to have it daily. And it is a growth process each day as we grow and we learn. We should look at it like fuel for the life of the believer. It is the thing that keeps us going. We're each one unique. We're each one totally different. What affects me may not affect you. I might learn something today that you already knew, or I might learn something that you already knew and you've been using for years. But we are human. Basically, only three pages into the greatest story ever told, we messed it up.

The Garden of Eden, and we'd have done the same thing if we had been there. We would have been no different than Adam and Eve. That brings us to our America 250. And while we're in the Book of James, we're mostly going to look at people who are named James. Today, his name was King James the First. He ascended to the English throne in 1603. The nation was bitterly divided between the conservative Anglicans and the more reform-minded Puritans. In January of 1604, the king convened a religious

conference to see what they could do about this disunity, and the result was a decision to create a new unified translation of the Bible. Forty-seven scholars worked on the project. They checked, they cross-referenced, they read manuscripts that were available.

Referenced each other's works. The first edition of this new Bible was published in 1611, and it has become the benchmark of Bible translations, with over a billion copies being sold. And in honor of its founder, it was named the King James. 77 years later, in 1688, 68 years before America claimed their independence from King James's descendants, Benjamin Harris published America's first textbook in Boston, and he called it the New England Primer. But he drew heavily from the King James version of the Bible in the content of this first textbook. For example, the alphabet section was divided up like this: A, as in Adam's fall, we all sinned. C, Christ crucified for sinners died. P.

Peter denied his Lord and cried. From before the Revolutionary War, America was already a Christian nation, already teaching children lessons from the King James Bible. In Deuteronomy 11:19, the Bible says this: "And you shall teach them your children, speaking of them, when you sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." So we are on our journey here of learning about how we are to behave. Next week we'll look at the last part of chapter one of the book of James. Let's pray. Father, bless our week as we go, Lord. That we would be good stewards of what you have given us, Lord. That we would study your word, Lord. That we would treasure your word, but most of all we would store it in our hearts, Lord, so that when we need it, we can call it forth. Bless us now with a safe week, Lord, a productive week. In your name we pray. Amen.

TEACHING SCHEDULE

THE BOOK OF JAMES

BEHAVE

How Do We Learn How to Behave ?

September 20	James 1:1-18	Faith Under Pressure
September 27	James 1:19-27	Just Do It !
October 4	James 2:1-13	Mercy Over Favoritism
October 11	James 2:14-26	Faith that Works
October 18	James 3:1-12	Power of Words
October 25	James 3:13-18	Wise or Otherwise
November 1	James 4:1-17	Grace and Humility
November 8	James 5:1-12	Rotting Riches
November 15	James 5:13-20	Praying Church
November 22		Thanksgiving Lesson

THE BOOK of JAMES

Faith without works is dead
A dead faith is worse than no faith at all

AUTHOR

James, the brother of Jesus
Parallels between this letter and letter he penned to churches in Acts 15
are unmistakable
Book begins with unusual word “greetings” – only other use in Bible is
in the Acts 15 letter

DATE

James was martyred in 62 AD
No mention of Gentile Christians or an organized Christian church
No mention of the Jerusalem Council (49 AD)
Most likely written about 45 AD-perhaps earliest writing in New
Testament

SETTING

Written from Jerusalem where James was leader of the church
Written to Jewish Christians scattered across the world

PURPOSE

Describes the characteristics of true faith
Challenges readers to examine their daily attitudes and actions
Real faith produces real change

KEY VERSES

James 1:19 = “...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to
wrath...”
James 2:14 = “...what does it profit someone if he has faith but does not
have works?...”

JAMES CHAPTER ONE
VERSES 1-18
Faith Under Pressure
Take-a-Ways

Christ did not come to make bad people better
He came to make dead people alive

In the Kingdom of God, the way up is down

The Anatomy of Sin:
Desire – Sin – Death
Stop temptation at the point of desire

Jesus is perfect – we are not
Live in the knowledge that God loves you and understands your struggles

Is it possible to have joy in the midst of trials ?
In Hebrews 12:2 Paul wrote of Jesus on the eve of the crucifixion:
Looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the JOY set before
Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of
God.

His name was King James I – He ascended to the English throne in 1603. The nation was bitterly divided between conservative Anglicans and reform-minded Puritans. In January 1604, the king convened a religious conference to discuss this disunity. The result was a decision to create a new, unified translation of the Bible.

Forty-seven scholars worked on the project, checking and cross checking each other's work. The first edition was published in 1611 and it has become the benchmark of Bible translations with over one billion copies being sold. Seventy seven years later (1688) – sixty-eight years before America would declare independence from King James' descendants - Benjamin Harris published America's first textbook in Boston. The "New England Primer" drew heavily on the King James Bible for its content. Its alphabet section went like this:

"A" – In ADAM's Fall, we all sinned
"C" – CHRIST crucyf'id, for sinners dy'd
"P" – PETER - deny'd, His Lord and cry'd

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up .Deut 11:19