

James

by Billy Strachan

Billy Strachan's sermon on James emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and patience in one's Christian journey over the pursuit of recognition through church activities.

Duration: 42:29

Scripture: James 1:1-3, James 2:14 - 3:1, James 5:8

Topics: "James"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker introduces the epistle of James and provides background information before diving into the main subject. The writer of the epistle is identified as James, and the speaker clarifies that there are three men with the same name in the New Testament. The letter begins with a formal greeting to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. The speaker encourages the audience to read James 2:14-26 before the next session, as it will be discussed in detail. Additionally, the speaker mentions that the epistle covers various topics such as conquering temptations, controlling the tongue, overcoming worldliness, and facing life's trials.

Transcript

We apologise for the rather rough quality of this recording, but it does improve as it goes along. This first lecture will be a bit of a grind because we'll really be doing a bit of sort of background to the epistle before we start dealing with the subject, and it's a very personal one, simply getting you to see the need for yourself to be an ordinary human being. So, the epistle of James, if you put down in your notes, number one, section one, the introduction, James one, verse one, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Now under that put A, the writer. Now there are three men in the Bible that have the name James in the New Testament, and I've sorted them all out for you, so even if it sounds like I'm reading the latest British rail timetable, just take them down and then in future you'll know, as you go through the scriptures, just which James is being referred to. So number one under A, number one, James the son of Zebedee, Matthew's gospel, put these references down, Matthew, 421, 10, 2, 17, 1. Mark's gospel, 119, 129, 317, 537, 9, 2, 1035, 1041, 13, 3, 13, 3, and 1433.

Luke's gospel, 5, 10, 6, 14, 8, 51, 9, 28, and 9, 54. And the Acts of the Apostles, Acts of the Apostles, 1, 13, and 12, 2. Now this James was the brother of the apostle John, and he was one of the sons of thunder, depicting his particular temperament, impetuous, quick-tempered. He was one of the sons of

thunder, the third person called to be a disciple, the third person called to be a disciple, and he was the first of the apostles to be martyred.

The first of the apostles to be martyred. Number two, James the son of Alphaeus, just four references to this gentleman, Matthew, 10, 3, Mark, 318, Luke, 6, 15, Acts, 1, 13. Now we know nothing of this disciple apart from the fact that he was called, followed, and was still following on the day of the inauguration of the organism of the body of Christ, and that's important.

Called, followed, kept on following, yet we know nothing of what was accomplished through his particular Christian experience, or of any service for the Master. And one of the first lessons that I think it would be advisable to bring to your attention is that God has his forgotten reserves. God has his forgotten reserves.

They are forgotten by the world, forgotten by Christians, forgotten by the Church, but never forgotten by God. Now this is contrary to the thinking that has created so much of the frustration in some of you people already in your Christian experience, because the Church will try to push you into believing today that spirituality means being in the forefront, that you can only show people how spiritual you are by how busy you are in the Church's activities. Therefore you must push to be on the top, you must push to be in activity, you must push always to be noticed by others in the Church doing something, and if you're not, then you will count off either with the backsliders or the lazy.

Now always bear in mind that throughout God's dealings with men on the earth, he has always had those up his sleeve that he found it necessary not to let the world see. And so please don't find yourself feeling obligated to push forward and be noticed in Christian service, or even to get into it. And be prepared, and it's a big step to be prepared, to say to God Almighty, even if it means for the next 80 years, I never am noticed doing anything, nor am I ever called to do anything.

I'm not moving unless you do call me, and I won't move unless you call me, therefore I'm prepared to be a nobody. And it will mean that you'll have to suffer the indignity of the Church, who will constantly say behind your back, you're a lazy lout. But just learn to be big enough to take that.

Because if you don't and you feel that you must have a reputation for being on the ball and keen and used by God, the next thing you're going to do is get onto the rat race and the treadmill of busyness, which you think will equal the right to be claimed spiritual. And you will frustrate yourself because God will not be in your busyness one bit. If his idea for you as a believer is that you're faithful every day for 60 years to him, in your relationship to him, yielded completely, filled in control by his Spirit, yet just set aside for the day to enjoy living, but hanging around doing nothing, God will never bless you if you step out of that.

If that's what he wants you, that's what he wants you. And so kids, take the pressure off. And don't yield to the pressures of other believers that try to pressure you into activity.

I had a debate on Saturday evening in the Tent Hall in Glasgow this weekend on evangelism. And the first speaker that got up was a missionary who was very naughty and misused the platform, not to speak on evangelism, but to criticize the superintendent of the Tent Hall's statement in a previous prayer letter, that there was as great a need to make Jesus Christ known in Britain as there was overseas. And he spent his 10 minutes showing that there was enough statistics around to prove there was a greater need overseas than in Glasgow and in Scotland.

And then he promptly sat down. And the next gentleman that got up, who was a lecturer at Strathclyde University, said that perhaps the reason we've got the statistics all mixed up is that we're too busy looking for statistics instead of focusing our attention on the strategy. And he gave 10 minutes on, find the method and you'll definitely find success.

And so I got up and suggested that we deal with it from a spiritual side, and that the need is not the call, God is the call. Because if it's the need that is the call, it's the place where the biggest need is going to win. And that isn't necessarily God's business.

So the statistics are unimportant. And I remember once being pinpointed in a college in the United States by Dr. Lionel Gourmet, who asked me, what about the Muslims, Bill? And I said, I don't care thumbs about the Muslims. He said, have you no heart for the Muslims? I said, no, not one bit.

Can't stand the Muslims. Bill, they're all lost. I said, I don't doubt it for a minute, but I don't care two hoots about the Muslims.

And he was as shocked at my reply as he wanted me to be shocked at his pinpointing me to be a missionary in the land of the Muslims. And he says, why aren't you interested? I said, because God has built into me a disinterest in the Muslims so that I'll stay in Britain. And I move at the call of God and not by the needs of your tears and pleading about the great need of the Muslims.

And I had to explain to them on Saturday night that if you get the spiritual side of your life right, then God will give you a strategy that will be yours and nobody else's. And if you use it under his guidance, you'll change the statistics. Well, I went down like a ham sandwich in a synagogue.

But nevermind, bless them anyway. And that's fine. But you see, it's typical of the church today to push and push and push a need to push a method and to even squeeze you kids into a particular mold.

I mean, look at the fallacy in the United States that utter dedication and consecration is going overseas to the mission field. It's the biggest load of codswallop you people over there have ever been fed with. And it's nonsense.

God has always had people that have been absolutely faithful. Nothing wrong with the relationship to Christ. And he didn't want them in service.

He wanted them on the reserves just in case of an emergency. And if the emergency never arose, he never used them. And they entered into the presence of the Lord knowing they had fulfilled an important task.

And so right away, take the pressure off yourself by feeling obligated to be a full-time worker. Run from full-time service as fast as you can until there's only one alternative, and that's to be a full-time worker. But don't run toward it because plenty of people will open the door, take you in, and you'll break your heart.

Joshua was a typical person like that. Eighty-five years he hung around at the tailcoat of Moses, taking down notes. And you think it's bad for five months? He did it eighty-five years, and he must have thought at eighty-five, I wish this fellow would hurry up and move on.

I'm getting beyond it myself. And yet at eighty-five, God says to him, your day has come, get up and go. This is the moment I've been waiting for.

And he began his service at eighty-five. And you think of Mr. Ashbridge, he's traveled more and preached more since he was sixty than he has done in the first sixty years of his life. And God can do it.

God can pick up a man at sixty and give him the charisma of health and the gift of preaching and teaching, and make the latter end of his life far more useful than the first sixty years. But he had to hang around for sixty years waiting. And you know, we get kids that are Christian, and because they're not, Bible class leaders, superintendents, pastors at seventeen and eighteen, they feel God's abandoned them.

Personally, I would shoot any pastor that put any of you in a job. You're too young for it, and it's ridiculous to go into a church and find a nineteen-year-old Sunday school superintendent. And they want to read their Bible and just see the average age in Scripture that God began to call men for service.

And it was between thirty and fifty years of age was the prime years for service. And no novice should ever be entrusted to that kind of work. Because we always feel, get in, get on, we're the only ones that can do it.

And it gets pathetic, you know, to go around the church and find somebody saying to you, well, Mr. Trachan, I've had my bit of the service, you know, in this church, and now I've handed it on to the young ones because I've had my day, and so I'm leaving them to do the Sunday school work and the superintendency and stuff like that because I've had a good go at it and getting beyond it now. What age are you, twenty-five? When you get married, well, that means there's just so much to do in looking after the married side of life, we have to drop out of church activity. Nonsense.

That's when you're just about ready to begin to qualify for the position of deacon, for the position of elder, for the position of being used in the church. Once they've seen that you can bring up a family and control the family and have the respect of your family, then we can trust you with the family of God and the church. But look at the church that's been run by bachelors, and some of them run by single women.

Utterly ridiculous. When it's laid down in the scriptures as clear as anything, that they have to be married and control their own family, or else how can they control the church of God? So don't be pushed by this. Learn to wait.

Just be one of God's reserves. Just like James, the son of Alphaeus, picked up, called, followed, committed, keep on following, and if he never says he has something to do, just praise God for the holiday. You're there for some reason.

And if he has got something for you to do and he suddenly says it's sixty, get up and go. That's his business. He'll do it.

Another one was Elijah. He was the biggest surprise that ever entered Elijah's life. For Elijah had stood and defied God to his face in the cave and said, I tell you, I'm the only one you've got left.

And if you don't have me, you're in a mess. Of course, lots of Christians have this opinion today. They get the idea that Christianity is fading out, you see.

And so, I mean, they come through our door to Bible school. And isn't God, isn't God, isn't God got something to be thankful for that I've come to Bible school? I mean, just think, if you didn't have people like me around, church would be finished. And when God saved me and Jesus Christ saved me, boy, he's going to learn that he really died for something.

Heaven's got an asset now they've got me. And I don't know what the church of Jesus Christ would do if they didn't have me. And boy, we really feel that if we're as keen as to give up a job and come to Bible school for five months, heaven must be chopping up the golden stars on our wee book upstairs.

And it's the biggest load of rubbish. He doesn't need you, but he delights to use you in spite of what you are. But he can afford to keep you hanging around.

And Elijah stood there and said, I'm the only one you've got. So today we're not on the aggressive, we're on the defensive because there's a woman after me and I'm hiding from her. And God says, good, then I have a job for you to do.

You'll tell that king that and that king that, yes. And then you'll anoint Elisha to be the prophet in your place. Where did you dig him up from? I've already stood here and told you, God, there's only me.

And that's your opinion. I have 7,000 waiting for your job, Elisha's next on the list. 7,000 that have never bowed their knees to Baal.

7,000 that are faithful. 7,000 that are totally committed. 7,000 that I can put my finger on today and use them in my work.

Don't you ever get the impression that it's the activists in Christian service that are always on the platform and seen that are the spiritual. You wouldn't believe it that God has people all over this country, all over every country you go to that are utterly faithful, totally committed. They're not running around shouting about their charisma.

They have a daily walk with Jesus Christ. They're never noticed. They're forgotten.

God hasn't yet said to them, get up and go. So they're not going. And they're prepared to go through life as a reservist.

And that might be the biggest piece of relief to some of you this morning that you've ever had in years. Well if it is, hold on to it. Firmly.

And don't go back to a church and be moved by people into positions. I mean the old business of come now you've been to Bible school. Just don't let it affect you.

Even though you're tempted. Just don't. You move at God's voice.

And if God says don't, don't because I don't care how much service you fulfill. Do you know that you can be committing sin by being a pastor? You can be committing sin by being a missionary. You can be committing sin by sitting in front of kids every Sunday morning teaching a Bible lesson.

You can be committing sin singing in a choir. You can be committing sin sitting on a committee in the church. You can be committing sin preaching.

Yes, you can. Because whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And if any activity you do is done under the pressures of men and not from a faith-loved relationship to Jesus Christ where he has said get up and go and do, then all your activity, even if you're the best preacher in the world, is sin.

It's sin. And remember what Jesus said, there will come a day when people will stand up before me and they'll look me in the face and they'll say, Lord, we should be with you. We've preached in your name.

Say, I don't know you. Lord, we've cast out demons in your name. Sorry, I don't know you.

Sorry, I didn't know you. Jesus Christ looks at them and says, I don't know you. I don't know you.

I never knew you. Yes, you can do philanthropic deeds. You can build a church brick by brick.

But if God never told you to build it, every drop of cement was sin. You can give all the money in the world, but if God didn't tell you to give the money, every cent, every penny, every deutschmark, every yen was sin if God never told you to do it. And if you cast out a demon and it wasn't under the jurisdiction and relationship you have to Jesus Christ and his authority to do it, you've committed sin.

If you heal people without Jesus Christ saying you do it, you've committed sin. And it often makes me wonder how many men are ministering Sunday by Sunday and committing sin by ministering because they've never been sent, they went. They weren't moved by God, they were moved by men, by the needs, by demand, by the prestige.

Of course some churches the only way to keep people is get them on a committee, that's why you find there's 485 committees. With 20 members to the committee, so the first three pages of the bulletin are all the committees names. Prestige gets them there.

If you don't have me on there pastor, I'll take my check out. I wouldn't rat fish and chips on these checks. Because God hasn't sent them.

So remember that, there are people like Elijah, like Joshua, there are people like James the son of Alpheus. And nobody, nobody, absolutely forgotten. And as far as the world was concerned, what good was it in calling him to be one of the twelve? What did he accomplish? You'll find out one day when you get to heaven.

It doesn't have to be seen. It doesn't have to be seen. So please bear that in mind.

Number three. James the brother of the Lord Jesus. James the brother of the Lord Jesus.

Matthew's gospel, 13:55. Mark's gospel, 6:3. Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18.

1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:7. Galatians 1:19, 2:9 and 2:12. Now this James was opposed to the Lord Jesus in the beginning.

He did not believe in the Lord Jesus in the beginning. He was his half brother. His mother was Mary, his father was Joseph.

Whereas Jesus' mother was Mary, but his father was the Holy Ghost. And he was opposed to him in his beginnings. Didn't believe in his Messiahship.

If you want to take down scriptures for that, put down Matthew's gospel, chapter 12, verses 46-50. Matthew 12, 46-50. And John 7, verses 1-5.

And it's better and more clearly understood in the Amplified New Testament. John 7, 1-5 in the Amplified New Testament. However, he did get converted.

And we learn that he was one of the ones to whom the risen Christ appeared and had a personal interview. When Paul was listing in 1 Corinthians 15 the various resurrection appearances of Christ, he specifies there very clearly in that 7th verse, they appeared to James, his brother also. And it could be that at that interview was the time when James finally conceded and gave in to acknowledging his brother to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are three other references. If you just put down a note here, just sort of title it note and put it down. There are three other references in the New Testament to a James being the brother of Jude.

These references are Luke 6, 16, Acts 1, 13, Jude 1. Now, the reason I've separated these out is that there is no clear proof as to which James this is. Although in Mark 6, 3 we must note that one of the names mentioned as being related to the Lord Jesus is a Jude. But scholars are still very much debating as to whether we have the right to immediately assume that these three references refer to James, the brother of the Lord.

Now, the Lord's brother is the one that's accepted as being the author of this epistle. The third James, James the brother of the Lord is the one that is given the right of being the writer of this epistle. Now, in your outline B, A was the writer, B the time of writing, the time of writing.

Now, this is a very important little section for the simple reason that the contents of the letter are so opposed to the great theological discourses of the spiritual contents of what you get in Jesus Christ and being so earthly and down to earth that scholars have tried to make it a very late written epistle to put it in a position where they could sort of weaken its message and say that it shouldn't even be canon into scripture at all. And remember, many people have had this tremendous problem. Martin Luther himself referred to this letter as being a pile of straw because he had been so made aware of the lost message in his day and generation that there was a salvation by faith that was void of works and when he started reading this epistle he couldn't see it fitting into the framework of the experience of a salvation by faith without works and so even he wanted to just throw it away and burn it.

But it does have its place and you must get it down in your hearts that it is one of the earliest letters that was ever written to the church. So although many have attempted to attribute a very late date to the epistle it's accepted as being the first epistle ever to have been written. Now there's evidence for this in the epistle itself and I'm going to give you five evidences for its early writing.

Number one, from the first verse you will note that it's written to Jewish Christians who were scattered at the first dispersion. It is written to Jewish Christians who were scattered at the first dispersion that's recorded in Acts chapter 8 verses 1 to 4 when Saul and others began to persecute the church they were scattered abroad and everywhere they went they preached Christ. So one evidence is that it was written to a church that comprised solely of the twelve tribes, Jewish Christians.

Number two, only once in the epistle is the word church mentioned. Only once in the epistle is the word church mentioned and that's in James 5 verse 14. James 5 verse 14 Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church.

That's the only mention of the word church in the letter. Number three, there is no mention that the gospel had yet reached the Gentiles. There is no mention that the gospel had yet reached the Gentiles.

Therefore it stands logically that it could only have been written prior to the admission to the church of the Gentiles at the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 11 verses 1 to 18. You find Peter in Acts 11 verses 1 to 18 going back to the church at Jerusalem and reporting that the Gentiles through Cornelius and his household have now been introduced to the body of Christ. So only prior to the conversion of Cornelius could you ever have a church that comprised solely of Jewish Christians from the twelve tribes of Israel.

Number four, they still met in their synagogues. They still met in their synagogues. In James 2 verse 2 when it says if they come into your assembly a man in goodly apparel, that word assembly there is the word synagogue.

So they were still a church that were meeting within the confines of the Jewish synagogues. And number five, it contains evidence that the Jewish Christians were about to advance into very troublesome times. It contains evidence that the Jewish Christians were about to advance into very troublesome times which was the situation prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And that happened in A.D. 70. Put down two references to the trouble contained in the epistle. James 1 verse 2, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations.

And James 5 and verse 8, be ye also patient, establish your heart for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. And they believed just prior to the coming of the destruction of the temple they actually believed the Lord would return in those days. They thought he would come and save them from that.

But they didn't realize the whole of the church age would be in between. Now most commentators date the letter as early as 44 A.D. 44 A.D. See in your outline, see. I'm sorry I've had to make you work so hard on this first one but once that's out of the way it will be easier.

The purpose in writing. The purpose in writing. Two reasons.

Now I'll dictate them slowly because I want you to get these down. Number one. The purpose in writing.

Number one. To encourage believers in times of trial and temptation and persecution. I'll repeat that.

To encourage believers in times of trial and temptation and persecution. Secondly. To prove.

To prove that it is necessary for faith to be active and practical rather than a doctrine of the mind. D. Particulars of the epistle. Number one.

The key portion. Chapter 2 verses 14 to 26. The key portion is chapter 2 verses 14 to 26.

Number two. The key verse. You can look all this up later at your own time.

The key verse. Chapter 2 verse 26. Chapter 2 verse 26.

Number three. The key thought. The key thought.

Faith really works. Faith really works. Number four.

Key words. Key words. Words.

W-O-R-D-S. Wordies. I'm sorry but every time I go back to Glasgow I get all caught up again.

All caught up again. And it takes me a few days to get back into it. I had a good story when I was up of the Scotsman who went to Canada and he was visiting Montreal which is the main French section in Quebec area.

He went into a hairdresser and he said Donnez-moi un haircut. S'il vous plait. And it was a Scottish barber who had emigrated out there.

As he worked away in his hair he said You're Scottish. And he said I am. He said and you went to Bella Houston Academy.

He said yeah I did. He said and you buy your hat from Henderson's. Your school hat.

He said how do you know that? He said I've just found it in your hair. Oh my. Key words.

Key words. Faith. Faith.

Faith. Number two the second word is work. Faith.

Work. And the next one doer. D-O-E-R.

Not the Scottish long faced doer. No it was another word altogether. A doer.

One who does. Alright. And lastly my brethren.

My brethren. And that is important because it is essential to realize before we even go into this letter on its personal basis that it is an epistle that has nothing whatsoever to do with non-Christians. Don't ever use it.

It has nothing whatsoever to do with non-Christian people. And if you try to make this sense to the unconverted unregenerate man you will only frustrate him and break him. It is a letter that can only be understood by those who possess the spirit of Christ.

So the key words are faith, work, doer and my brethren. Number five. The key outline.

The key outline. Now I've sort of if you do it this way. Let's see.

Practical faith enables us. E-N-A-V-L-E. Enables us to.

And do that. And put under here chapter two. See.

And then we're going to put. Enables us to. Something else chapter one.

Something else chapter three. Something else chapter four. Something else chapter five.

Just a rough key outline. So first of all it's practical faith enables us. And that's chapter two.

Chapter one. To conquer temptations. Chapter two practical faith enables us to.

Chapter one. To conquer temptations. Chapter three.

To conquer the tongue. Chapter four. To conquer worldliness.

To conquer worldliness. And chapter five. To conquer life's trials.

To conquer life's trials. I'll give you that again. Practical faith enables us.

Chapter two. To conquer temptations. Chapter one.

To conquer the tongue. Chapter three. To conquer worldliness.

Chapter four. To conquer life's trials. Chapter five.

E. E in your outline. The opening of the letter. The opening of the letter.

James one one. Three very quick things and then we're finished. And tonight we'll get down to the substance of the letter.

Number one. The writer refers to himself as a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer refers to himself as a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A good way to open this practical letter because one cannot serve Christ without first acknowledging God. One cannot serve Christ without first acknowledging God. Number two.

The readers are the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Jewish Christians. Twelve tribes scattered abroad.

Jewish Christians. And number three. He sends a greeting.

The formal way of opening any letter. He sends a greeting. So number one was the writer refers to himself as a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One cannot serve Christ without first acknowledging God. Two the readers are the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Jewish Christians.

And three he sends a greeting. The formal way of opening the letter. Now if you can before this evening.

If the pressure is too much don't worry about it. But if you can before this evening read chapter 2 verses 14 to 26. It's not a long portion.

Before we start going into it tonight that will be a help.

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