

# Trusting God Works

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[0:00] Amen. Father, we come before you this morning and our praise is for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. It's on the solid rock we stand.

Our whole life is built on the rock of Jesus Christ. And today as we gather, as believers gathering on the Lord's Day, we're celebrating the resurrection through the year.

And although we focus on that on an Easter resurrection Sunday, Lord, it is what we actually celebrate every Sunday, that Christ is alive, that he is at work, that he is with us, that he is in us. And as we continue to worship you today, our prayer is that Christ would be exalted above all things and that your name would be made great. Father, for us this morning, we pray that you'd speak, that you'd encourage us, that you'd sharpen us.

And if there's someone here that does not know Christ, we pray that before they leave this place, they would surrender to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

[1:10] And so, Lord, we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right. I know it is going to be a great temptation this morning with food around you and more probably coming in as we continue to focus.

But I'm so glad that we have these times together. It's so great that we have this place. Amen. We've got a great place that we can meet in. It's adequate for all of our needs right now.

And even this Wednesday night, we're going to have just a great celebration time as we baptize some. There are some that are ready to be baptized.

If you're needing to be baptized, we need to talk before Wednesday if you want to be baptized Wednesday. But this Wednesday, we're going to do it right here. I think we're going to do it out on the platform out there, out that door, that porch out there.

And we're just going to celebrate together. This is one of those big things that we do as a church. One of the two ordinances we have of the Lord's Supper and baptism.

[2:16] And it's one of those things that we as believers should celebrate together. Every time somebody gets baptized, it is just the symbol of a life that has been transformed by Jesus and a picture of the gospel that Christ died and he rose again so that we could die to sin and be raised in his power.

And so we want to celebrate that. So be sure to be here Wednesday night. After that, we're going to have a walkthrough for those that are helping with the children's kingdom kids.

We're starting that on the 17th. And so if you're helping with that, we're going to come together, do a little walkthrough of what it's going to look like. And then on the 17th, we're going to kick off.

We're going to have student ministry meeting down the far end and the children in here, an adult Bible study going on next door. And it's going to be a great, great time together on Wednesday nights.

And again, what a blessing that we have this facility that we can do these things in. I want you to turn your Bible to James chapter one. We're starting a new study in the letter of James.

[3:25] It is on page 1215 in my Bible. I don't know where it is in your Bible, but James chapter one, this is the beginning of this, what's going to be the next several weeks.

As you know, if I've preached before through a book, it could be the next couple of years we're in this book. So buckle up. I don't think it's going to be that long, but it is going to be a great, great study together.

I was reading a story from a pastor as he was preaching through this book and he made a comment that, and I'll just read this section of what he said.

He said, a young man had been preaching in the presence of an experienced old pastor. And after he was done, he went to the old minister and said, what did you think of my sermon?

It took me a long time to study it. And the old man responded. He said, well, there's no doubt of that. He said, well, what did you think of my explanation of the text?

[4:31] Was it a very good one? He said, oh, yes, it was good, but it was a poor sermon. He said, well, why do you say that it was a poor sermon?

Didn't you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive? Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon. Well, then will you tell me why you think it to be such a poor sermon?

Because, he said, there was no Christ in it. Well, said the young man, Christ was not in the text. We are not to be preaching Christ always.

We must preach what's in the text. The old man said, don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London? Well, yes, said the young man. Ah, says the old pastor. And so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, and that is Christ.

[5:37] And my dear brother, your business when you get to a text is to say, now what is the road to Christ? And then preach a sermon running along the road toward that great metropolis who is Christ.

I have never yet found a text that had not gotten a road to Christ in it. And if ever I do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one.

I will go over hedge and ditch, but I would get to my master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.

It seems like sound advice. We don't just preach faith. We preach faith in Christ. We don't preach good works.

We preach good works out of gratitude to and in obedience to Christ. And so today we're looking at the book of James, and I'm just thinking as I've gone through this over the last few weeks that I have never seen a road to Christ more clearly than by a man who was so changed by Jesus.

[6:51] As I look to the letter of James, what you're seeing is an example of a man who was transformed. A man who was so changed by Jesus that his faith actually worked.

And what we see in this is really an intensely practical look all through this letter of a challenge to your spiritual living.

It's the smoke that smokes out a phony faith. And at the same time, it's a protein bar that sustains a growing spiritual strength when you're exercising your good works.

If you're wanting to tone, you read the Psalms. But if you're wanting to bulk, you read the book of James. When you get into this book, it is going to build some spiritual muscles, and it is going to be, I think, one of the most refreshing studies that you can do.

I think when you start looking at this letter, the Scriptures really don't give us a big picture of the conversion of James.

[8:06] This is James, the brother of Jesus. Early historians like Josephus and Eusebius mentioned him as an influential leader, but nowhere do we really have an account or an explanation of the change.

But what we do have is the Scriptures that give us evidence of a dramatic change in this man's life. And when you look at the whole picture and the evidence from elsewhere in Scripture, then as you begin to look at the book of James, you start to see the picture of a man who is preaching from experience.

And he's not just preaching faith, but he is emphatically preaching a faith in Christ. It's what we need to hear in our generation. We don't need just more faith.

We need faith in Jesus. It's not about the athletes running around the court or on the field with the, you've got to have faith on their shoes. That's not the Christian life.

It is not just preaching faith. We are preaching Christ. Him crucified, risen, coming again. That Christ. The Christ of the Scriptures.

[9:17] And without a doubt, as you look at the example of James throughout the Scriptures and specifically in his letter, what you see is a man who had his world absolutely rocked by Jesus.

Keeping our perspective straight is the theme of James' letter. And this is the consensus of every commentary I looked at, even listening to John MacArthur.

John MacArthur said, the book of James is a much-needed corrective to an unbalanced presentation of the Gospel. It emphasizes that true saving faith is not just mental assent, but a living faith that produces good works.

That's true. It's the summary of this book. It is the belief in God that actually works. It works pragmatically, but it actually produces works in our life.

And so that's the theme that I'm going along with as I'm going through this letter. It's believing in God actually works. It works pragmatically, but it actually plays itself out in your life in a real and tangible way as you have real faith.

[10:36] Charles Swindoll, when he was describing the book, he said it is a practical book that bridges the gap between belief and behavior. Warren Wiersbe, when he was describing this book, he said the Epistle of James is a practical handbook for living the Christian life.

It is not a theological treatise, but a series of exhortations on how to put our faith into action. R.C. Sproul, when he describes this book, he said the book of James is a bridge between justification and sanctification.

It shows how genuine faith produces a changed life. And this is the same view that great teachers have had through history, even Martin Luther, even though at the end of his life he had reservations about the book of James.

He still said it is a useful book for those who are already converted. It teaches good works and a holy life. John Calvin said, he said the book of James is a corrective to a false and carnal faith and a work that excellently teaches what true faith is and what its fruits are to be.

It is an unbelievably interesting book to study when you start realizing who James is and when you start seeing the facts about his life and his play in the early church.

[12:07] James is actually, this letter is actually the earliest New Testament writing. So keep that in mind. As a very practical work, this is the earliest writing.

We know that this is James, not the Apostle James, the brother of John, because he was martyred in 44 A.D. before this letter was written.

It's too early. His death was too early for this writing. James is the first of the general epistles, meaning that it's not addressed to a particular church, but it's intended for the churches, which even more so, even though all the Scripture is certainly addressed to us as believers, this is one of those general epistles that has direct, specific application to the churches at large, which means us, which means believers for all ages, which means us, which means when you read this book, just like the rest of Scripture, you ought to be listening, to see what God has to say to you today, because this word is God speaking to you.

That's emphatic. And this is what you get from James. When you deal with the name James, I happen to love the name personally, but it does get kind of confusing when you're studying because there are several Jameses through the New Testament.

This one becomes known as James the Just or James the Righteous. And for good reason. Because he was a righteous man. Through history, we've seen example, and even in the early church fathers, we see explanation of him being a righteous man in the early church.

[13:54] But it may be the simplest mark of his life to say that this is James, as he's referred to elsewhere, James, the brother of Jesus. Although he doesn't include that in his introduction here, it is a pretty significant factor of his life.

James 1.1, you see it here, and you see it similarly in the letter of Jude in Jude 1.1, as James and Jude both are brothers of Jesus, physical brothers of Jesus.

James 1.1, you see it here, James. His relationship with Christ is so transforming that his family relationship blurs into the background and his humility emerges because he does not even use that in the introduction.

I mean, who wouldn't want to use that when you introduce yourself? Oh yeah, I'm that James, the brother of Jesus. Anything anybody else could say, oh yeah, well I've done this or I've done that, I've planted churches, I've been a missionary.

That's wonderful. I'm James, the brother of Jesus. He gets the trump card, right? I mean, it's like having a conversation with somebody and they, you know, it's like one of those guys that went to the moon.

[15:12] You could say, oh, I did this or I did that. And he's like, yeah, I went to the moon. I'm the brother of Jesus. Although on the surface here, it may seem that this is merely, as he describes in verse 1, a letter to the Jews who are dispersed, James actually makes the argument that we need to treat each other equally as Jews and Gentiles.

And when he then speaks of this dispersion, although there is certainly application to the Jews who have been dispersed, it is also application to the church, even as Antioch, that was dispersed because of persecution.

So that when he talks about these 12 tribes in the dispersion, he's speaking of this in a general way, which is talking about all believers in the kingdom.

What I see happening in the opening lines of this letter is evidence of faith in Christ that can actually change somebody. And that can solidify a scattered church.

And if you're changed already, and if you're somebody that's come in contact with the resurrected Christ in your life, then I really think it'll stir the fire that's already there.

[16:39] When you read through this book, it will encourage you, it'll challenge you, it'll stir you up to even more good works because they'll be motivated from the right kind of faith.

And if you don't know Christ, well, I'll say if you know Christ already, it's going to give you stirring for the fire or it's going to give you clarity. It's going to give you some clarity in things that are cloudy in your life because now you're going to be able to compare what genuine faith looks like to what you're practicing, which sometimes is not genuine faith.

And you're going to get clarity out of that. And then I would say, if you're an unbeliever, you'll be able to see this and see what genuine faith looks like because the result is going to be absolute stunning joy for your life no matter what the circumstances of your life are.

And when you come to that kind of joy, you're going to see that that kind of joy only comes through the person of Jesus Christ. And when you get a vision of that Jesus and you come to know this Jesus, then you're going to be radically changed like James was changed.

And I think it's worth it. James was a changed man. So this is the outline that I'm going with this morning. If you're taking notes, I'm going to suggest at least three ways that James was changed so that you can begin to absorb, I think, what is going to be some great encouragement for you.

[18:09] The first way, number one, he was changed. The first way that he was changed in how he saw Christ. We didn't read the passage yet, so let's stand up.

I get excited. I get ahead of myself. So let's stand up. We're going to read this together. We're only looking at the first verse. I mean, every verse you come to in here, it's just packed, but we're looking at the first verse.

Here's what he says. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

That's it. And it's going to be enough this morning. Father, may you bless your word. Lord, may you speak. As we unpack this this morning, Lord, I pray that it would be just sweet to our savor, like a good piece of gum this morning, that we would chew it until the flavor is drained.

I pray this morning that as we soak it in, that we'll see Christ for who he is and that we'll serve him for who he is and that we'll spread the love of Christ and the joy of knowing Christ everywhere we go, no matter our circumstances.

[19:28] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The first way that he's changed is in the way that he saw Christ.

You've got to keep in mind who James is. This is setting the stage. James grew up in a religious home, you might say. Mark 6, as Jesus is teaching, this fact is actually drawn out.

As he's preaching, the skeptics come up and in Mark 6.3, they ask the question, is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James?

They already know James. James, along with, as the text says in Mark 6, James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, the brothers of Jesus, and are not his sisters here with us?

So, James is growing up in a home as a sibling to Jesus, his older brother. Jesus' older brother. If you've got older brother, then you've got younger brother syndrome.

[20:51] Right? You're in the shadow of older brother, and man, what it must be like to be in the shadow of Jesus. I had an older brother, I grew up that way, and oh, he could do no wrong.

He was the straight-A student, he was the all-state linebacker, he was all of this, he was student body president, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, I could never live up to it, so I chose my own path, quit high school, it was a bad choice.

Made a name for myself. I can't imagine what it's like to grow up in this home, however, what I would say is that James grew up in a home that was a godly home.

And there's no mistake about this, because when you look at the situation as James is growing up, his mother is Mary. And Mary is not just any Mary, and it's not just any woman, this is a godly woman.

And whatever we might say about Mary, we're not going to, as non-Catholics, worship Mary, but we do honor the position that Mary had as the Scripture even gives us the understanding when the angel Gabriel comes up and refers to Mary as the favored one.

[22:08] And told her, do not fear, for you have found favor with God. She does have a unique role, but she's not our intercessor and we don't worship her. Roman Catholics will worship her, and they run into a problem here, and these passages become an incredible difficulty for them that they have to explain away, because if he has brothers and sisters, then Mary is not a perpetual virgin.

We've got kids in the room, but we understand. Jesus is actually referred to as her firstborn. And this is in contrast to the way John the Baptist was referred to as the son of Elizabeth, not just firstborn.

Really, the only son. Joseph, according to the Scripture, did not know her until Jesus was born. And this phrase is actually describing something in the Greek language that indicates whatever the activity was picked up after something was completed.

Jesus was born, and then He knew her. And so, this takes away this idea that Mary was any kind of perpetual virgin.

she was actually a mother of many children, which does explain actually when Jesus is 12 years old and in the temple and they come for the Passover, they're experiencing this great religious time together, and Joseph and Mary go home, and they forget Jesus.

[23:42] Well, how do you forget Jesus if He's your only son? What a terrible mother you would have. Right? I mean, if you're thinking in Catholic terms, and He's the only child, then I don't want Mary as my intercessor, she's going to forget me.

Right? The reality is, I can completely understand this because, you know, as parents, I remember the time that we forgot Chandler when we were going out to eat.

We're going in different cars, we're trying to get things together, Brandy's got some, I've got some, I was probably supposed to be keeping up with him, I don't know, we get to the restaurant, where's Chandler? And it's because we've got other kids we're keeping up with, and we've got guests that we're trying to herd, and we're trying to get people together, and all this stuff, so it makes some sense.

But make no mistake in this, it was a godly home. Not only a mother who is pictured as such a godly mother, but you've got a father who is pictured as an unbelievably faithful and righteous man. He took Mary as his wife by faith. And in preserving Jesus from Herod's wrath, we have our Messiah preserved, and it was because of his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit led him to move and to act.

[25:06] The Bible says specifically that Joseph was a, quote, righteous man. So when James is referred to as James the righteous, what the Scripture is telling us is that James was his father's son.

He was a righteous man. He was a righteous man just like Joseph was a righteous man. He was a good man. He was a religious man. James' earliest exposure is seen in the activity of Jesus because we know he was a sibling.

He's not growing up with lightweight parents. Their home had to be some kind of spiritual sanctuary where he could grow up and be nurtured in the fear and in the admonition of the Lord so that when he was an adult he could hear the Gospel and respond.

But what we do know about James was that even though he grows up in this unbelievably spiritual home with the best possible religious godly parents, this ought to be encouragement to every parent.

In spite of that he was still an unbeliever. Well how do you know that James? How do you know he was an unbeliever? Because in John 7 verse 5 as Jesus is preaching and declaring that he's the Messiah the Scripture says and not even his brothers believed him.

[26:31] He was an unbeliever. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. A religious man, a good man, a righteous man, well respected man, possibly even at that age.

And yet, he was not born again. He was not saved. And if he died without Christ, he goes to hell for eternity. His unbelief is documented there in John chapter 7 and his absence is noted in John chapter 19 where Jesus is dying on the cross and when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son.

And then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. What is this saying? Well this is saying that here at Jesus' death, James is nowhere around.

He's not around in a capacity to even care for his mother either because he has disowned his mother. We don't know. We can't speak to that from silence. But what we do know is that he's not there and Jesus is more inclined to entrust his own mother to a disciple rather than to entrust her to another son who's an unbeliever.

Godly parents, but he's an unbeliever. It's the only thing we can conclude. But something happens.

[28:06] Something happens in James' life and you're like, well we see this letter, we see all these other things, how do we know that he came to faith in Christ? How do we know what happened?

What was the contributing factor in James' life that really turned things around for him? And you find the evidence in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 7 because although we don't know exactly when he believed or what happened, we do know this.

He had an encounter with the resurrected Christ. He had an encounter with Jesus just as we talked about our testimonies. You remember the pattern? It's my before and how I grew up and all of those things.

You see this pattern in James' life. You see the before of his life. And then what happens? There comes a moment in his life where he is confronted with the resurrected Christ. Not just theology about Jesus.

Not just ideas about Jesus. Not words about Jesus. But those words led him to a supernatural encounter with the real Jesus. An encounter that every one of us have to come to.

[29:11] It is not just a sense mentally to belief in words on a page. But it is words on a page that lead us to the person of Jesus Christ. There must be a moment in your life where you sense the conviction of your sin that has separated you from Jesus in such a way that you're drawn to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Something that will radically shock you and change the direction of your life. And what we see in 1 Corinthians 5.17 is just this when Paul is describing the Gospel in a nutshell as we talked about last week.

He said that Christ was buried. That He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture. That He appeared to Cephas, which is Peter, and the twelve.

And then He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. And then He appeared to James.

The resurrected Jesus appears to His brother. We're not talking about James the brother of John. That was included in the twelve.

[30:26] Now we're talking about another James that would be significant to the scattered church in Jerusalem, which is James, the brother of Jesus. He grew up in a great religious home, the godliest parents that he could ever have had, yet he was an unbeliever, but the only thing that would shock him into a transformation of his life is coming in contact with the risen Christ.

I'm telling you, that's what happened in my life February 3, 1990 when Jesus came in and showed this sinner that He separated from God. Did I see a vision of Jesus?

Did I see a giant burning cross? Did I see some 40-foot Jesus in the wilderness? No, I didn't see any of that. I didn't see anything like that. What I felt was the conviction of my soul.

What I felt was as the gospel was being preached, I was unusually drawn to Jesus and I didn't know why. And I tried to avoid it and I tried to push it out of my head and I didn't want to listen to it.

I put my fingers in my ears and said, la, la, la, la, la, I'm not going to listen. I'm not going to respond until my heart burst. Until the Holy Spirit welled up within me and drew me up from a grave.

[31:42] And the resurrected Christ came in and I believed that day. And I turned from my sin and I asked Him to come in and be the Lord of my life. James was changed in the way he saw Jesus.

And how did he see Him? Notice how he declares Jesus in this. James, a servant of God. There's his background. He grew up with a respect for God.

And I'm not James, the brother of Jesus. I'm James, the servant of God and. And then he uses the three word combination, the total picture of who Jesus is.

A servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew Him by the name Jesus. That was the name that He was given at birth.

It was what the angels said. He's going to be the Savior. It's a picture, a total picture of the work of Christ. So what he's declaring here is the transformation of the way he sees Jesus.

[32:54] Not as brother of Jesus. Not just as my sibling. Now I'm a servant. And I'm a servant of the King. And He is Christ Jesus, the Lord to me.

That's who He is to me. He's not just my sibling. He's Christ Jesus, the Lord. He is Jesus, is the Jesus in the original language which means Savior. What's my response to a Savior?

Well, what's He saving you from? Saving you from your sin. And because He's saving you from the penalty of your sin and rescuing you from the clutches of your sin, He is your Savior.

Savior. And so, what's the response to a Savior? Well, if He's going to save me from my sin, then my response to Him being Savior is that I repent. I turn from sin. Why?

Because that's what He saved me from. That's why I don't drink anymore. That's why I don't carouse anymore. That's why I don't do a bunch of ungodly things. That's why my language is cleaned up.

[33:54] That's why my life has been transformed. Because I've turned from some things. I've been saved from all of that. He rescued me. And I repented of my sin.

And He said, He's not just Jesus, but He's the Christ. And He's the Christ, which means it's the Old Testament equivalent to the Messiah. He's the Christos.

He's the anointed one. He's the expected one. He's the Christ of the Old Testament. Everything that the Old Testament said about the Savior who's coming is wrapped up in Jesus being the Christ.

what's the response to that? Well, the Scripture said He's coming and Scripture told us about Him and I've got to believe.

I've got to believe the message about Him being the Christ. He is the expected one. He's coming to take away the sin. He's my Savior. I repent. He's the Christ. I believe.

[34:53] And I put my faith and trust in Him. And He's Lord. That means boss. He's the Master, actually.

He's the Master of my life. For Him to be the kurios, the Lord, those three things are the transformation of Him being way more than just a sibling now. Now He is my Savior and my Lord, my King, Messiah.

I've put my faith in Him. That's who I am now. I've been changed because of the way I see Jesus.

He's not just a good teacher. He's not just someone that I can respect. He's not just a good example for me. But every one of us have to come to the place in our life where we have an encounter with that Jesus and we see Him for who He is.

It's kind of like the episode of Undercover Boss. You know, that's your life. You ever watch Undercover Boss? Kind of a dumb show, I've got to admit.

[35:56] After you see it, the concept is really great. You know, the boss comes in and the boss is, you know, he's going to examine the way things are functioning at work. He's the company owner in Palm Springs somewhere or something and he comes to Detroit to some restaurant and he's going to be a worker and so he puts on this fake mustache that looks goofy and a wig that's kind of crooked and the whole episode is him.

I'm going to be a fry cook. And you can tell he's like some business guy that golfs all week and now he's like, I'm going to be a fry cook and everybody's walking around this guy going, you're no fry cook.

You know, we can tell there's something wrong. But lo and behold, there's somebody on the show that is convinced that he's just a normal guy. And so, they're going along and they're disclosing all these things, the ways they're cheating the company and they're doing all this stuff.

And then, just like on Scooby-Doo, the mask comes off. You know, you would have got away if it wasn't for your kids. But now he's the undercover boss and now you're all fired because I see what's going on.

I'm the owner of the company. And there's this close-up shot of the worker when they come to the realization that he's not the fry cook. And it's like, it dawns on them, he's the boss.

[37:17] And all of a sudden, transformation of the way you see him. And what we have here is just the evidence in the opening line of a transformation that came in the life of James who saw Jesus for who he is.

Saw him as Lord. Saw him as Savior. Saw him as Messiah. He believed. He repented. He followed Christ. It's a picture of transformation. It's the picture of somebody who's been changed.

The Gospel informs you that Jesus is Savior and so you repent. It informs you that Christ is the chosen one and so you believe. And Lord means master that implies you are to follow.

It is the picture of the Gospel. The before, what happened, and the after. It's the vision that Isaiah's had of God in a transformation moment even in the Old Testament when Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter 6, it was the year that King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord.

[38:33] When my hero in this world has passed away, when the one that we look to for security and hope, this great king who made Israel great, when he died, it was when he died, I saw the Lord.

And he was on a throne high and lifted up, Isaiah said. The train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood seraphim, each having six wings. With two he covered his face.

With two he covered his feet. With two he flew. And one called to another saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled with His glory. In a moment, in a moment for Isaiah, he is confronted with the reality of who God is.

And when he sees Christ for who He is in the temple, changes Him. He'll never be the same. The foundations of the threshold shook and the voice of Him who called and the house was filled with smoke.

And I said, Isaiah said, and I said, Woe is me, for I am lost. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the people, among people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

[39:49] James was changed. It's the question we have to ask is we're going to examine ourselves and say was there a moment in my life where I saw Jesus for who He really is in my life?

Saving me from my sin. Coming as Messiah. And am I following Him? Will I be like Isaiah who said, at the voice of the Lord, whom shall I send and who will go for us?

He said, send me. Follow. Number two, not only was He changed in the way that He saw Christ, but He was changed in the way that He served Christ.

Because of how He saw Christ, He went from sibling to slave. This is the word that He uses. James, a servant, it says in the ESV, and it gives a little number one next to that in the ESV text, and the footnote down there says, or slave.

I'm not sure why it is often translated servant in the New Testament, except that in our American culture, there is such an aversion to the idea of slavery.

[41:06] It's the reality of the New Testament time that there were many, many slaves.

In fact, I think the number was one out of every three people in Rome was a slave. An incredible population. When the word here that's used, when this word is used, the word means, actually the statistic is one out of every two people in Rome.

Sorry, I was mistaken. If it was this room, this whole half of the room would be, or maybe that half, right? One half of this room would be slaves.

The word is *doulos* in the original language, and as it's defined, the word specifically refers to socioeconomic context. It is, according to the Greek dictionaries, it is usually distinct from what we know of as servants.

And the translation might be lightened because of our American version to the topic of slavery. The word is used in connection with a master, and in contrast to someone who is free.

[42:25] It speaks of one who is holy duty bound to their master with all the exclusive rights. In fact, in one dictionary, it said it this way, and I loved it.

This is the Kittle dictionary. It said, slave is the universal meaning of the word *doulos*. And it is the word which most uniquely describes the believer's relationship to Christ.

In fact, it has a companion word, a necessary companion word without which *doulos* doesn't make sense.

And the companion word is *kurios*, and *kurios* means Lord. If you don't have the word Lord, then the word *doulos* means nothing.

But because there is the use of *doulos* here, you can expect that the word *kurios* is going to be close by, which in fact it is, I am a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[43:30] What he's saying here is, there has been a radical transformation now in how I serve God. Not just the way I see God in the person of Christ, but how I serve God through Christ.

He's my Lord, and I'm a slave. In the Greek culture, *doulos* referred to the involuntary, permanent service of a slave.

But when a Hebrew or a Jew was using this word, it elevated the meaning of the word into a sense that described a servant who not only is one by compulsion, but one who commits himself to a master.

To a master that he loves and respects. And the description of this is given in Exodus and in Deuteronomy, where a servant or a slave is supposed to be set free, but if he by choice chooses to follow a master, he's to be brought to the door and have his ear pierced with an owl.

A hole is to be put into his ear so that it is an indicator that he is a slave by choice because of his love for his master. He walks his whole life as a slave to that master because he loves and respects that master.

[44:43] Now we may have trouble understanding that in our culture because of our aversion, but I'm telling you this, you're either a slave of Jesus Christ or you don't belong to him at all.

Jesus said, if you want to become great in the kingdom of God, you must become a slave. You want to come into the kingdom of God, you've got to humble yourself and become like a child. Not even just to be a great disciple, but he said, you can't be my disciple at all without that kind of humility where you recognize who you are in Christ because that is going to direct how you serve him.

You see, if you're not a slave, what that means is you've got all kinds of alternatives and options about what you're going to do and what you're not going to do. You're going to say, well, I may go to church on Sunday and I may not.

See, that's maybe an employee with a certain number of days off and maybe you've got that kind of employment relationship. And so you think, well, I've used up half of my sick days or something.

I don't know how that works. But the reality is you're thinking of yourself as something other than a slave. A slave says, I have no rights. I have forfeited all my rights because I have a Lord.

[46:04] There's a Lord of my life. And what James has come to is the realization of who Jesus is. And that affects how he serves Him. Because if I think He's the Messiah who I'm to believe in and He's the Savior that's going to save me from my sin and He's the Lord that I'm to serve with all of my life, then that's going to radically alter what I do in my service to Him.

I may have to say if He calls me to go overseas to be a missionary, then I really don't have an option, do I? Do I?

If He calls me to be a pastor or a teacher, then I really don't have an option, do I? It radically changes the way you see who you are. When we lived in Central Asia, for security purposes since we're online, but when we lived in Central Asia, it was interesting to see the B2J movement happening because we were in a prime time of when there was the back to Jerusalem movement of the house churches from Beijing moving toward the Silk Road and all the way back to Jerusalem because what the churches in Beijing said of those house churches, they said, man, somebody brought us the Gospel.

Somebody preached the Gospel all along the Silk Road sacrificing their lives and they brought the Gospel to us. The least we can do is send the Gospel back and go through the Middle East and all the difficult roads that go back through.

And what they would do in their church is they would say, they would all pray and they would fast and they would say, okay, okay, who's going to be called to go? And they'd pray over this and they'd fast and they'd seek the Lord.

[47:48] And then the pastor would come and he would come to the body of believers gathered and he would say to one of them, and he'd say, Matt, you've been called.

Now what would you do? Right? You want me to go where? Afghanistan. How about that? Yeah, I don't think I'll be doing that, right?

You hear that and you're going to go, I'm going to where? Pakistan? I don't really feel the calling right now. I'm going to go where?

Some of those areas where they're beheading people and all that kind of stuff? You think I'm going? And you know the response of the people in that house church? They said, praise God, I've been called.

And these people would leave their job and everything from Beijing and they would start traveling and we would meet some of these believers along the way that are on their way spreading the Gospel going back to Jerusalem.

[48:50] I mean, you talk about a radically different perspective on what it means to be a slave of Jesus Christ. I'll do whatever He calls me to do.

If He calls me to tell my neighbor about Jesus and preach the Gospel, you really think you have the option?

Who are you following? What are you looking at? You do not have the option. You are a slave of Jesus Christ.

You've been bought with a price, the Scripture says. Your body's not your own. When Paul is telling his testimony in Galatians 2, verse 9, it says to the Galatian church, he said, he had come to Christ, he went to the Jews, they were perceiving that the Holy Spirit was at work with him, and who did he go consult with in Jerusalem?

He says, and I went and I consulted with James and Cephas and John. James and Peter and John. James and John being mentioned separately.

[50:06] This is not James the brother of John. This is James of Jerusalem church. James. James the brother of Jesus. Because James had served his way to the top and was the leader in the church now.

And what we see is by the time you get to Acts 15, James' role as elder is solidified in the church because now the problem of the Gentiles has come up and they send people with Paul and Barnabas to go and inquire of the apostles and the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

The first man that speaks up is Peter who represents the apostles and he gives his answer and then who represents the elders? James. The brother of Jesus.

And when James gives the word then it's acceptable to all the apostles and all the believers and they send word to the Gentile churches about how to function. He has served his way to the top in leading the church because in the kingdom of God that's how it works.

You want to be great in the kingdom? You become a slave. It's like one businessman that was in a Bible study group.

[51:18] He said, how can you tell if you have a servant attitude? And the teacher responds back. He says, by the way you react when you're treated like one.

We're not changed without serving Christ for who He is. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God and you are not your own for you were bought with a price?

So glorify God in your body. Or in chapter 7, he said, for he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a free man of the Lord. And likewise, he who is free when he's called is a bondservant of Christ.

In Romans 6, he said, but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God. The fruit you get leads to sanctification and the end, eternal life.

Coming to Jesus will change you, man. Change you. Rock your world. He was changed in how He saw Christ. He was changed in how He served Christ.

[52:32] And He was changed in how He spread Christ. As He says this, James, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

And now He's addressing all of the churches of the dispersion, all the believers who are scattered. Why are they scattered? Well, there's twofold purpose in scattering in the Scripture.

One is because of the judgment of God when you're in sin. And when you're in sin, sometimes God does a work to scatter you. Ever been scattered? Amen? And not only are there times when He scatters you as a part of judgment and work in His life, but He also scatters you to spread the Gospel.

And this is what happened in the church in Antioch. The church in Antioch, when persecution came after the death of Stephen, the Scripture says, and they were scattered everywhere, and everywhere they went, they preached the Lord Jesus.

The scattering here was not out of disobedience. The scattering was in obedience. The scattering was a work of the Holy Spirit to multiply the work.

[53:45] Even as you look at the spreading and the dispersion, the diaspora is a reference to the Jews who were scattered and put in captivity from the time of Babylonians and others.

And you see this through the history of Israel. They're often thrown into captivity. And now there are little groups and little pockets of Jews in every pagan city.

What was God doing in scattering the Jews? Well, what we see happen after Christ comes and after the resurrection, now all of a sudden, the apostles are sent out to preach the Gospel.

And where do they go? They go to the synagogues in every city. They go everywhere that people have been scattered. And they start preaching the resurrected Christ. And people are born again.

The scattering of the church may have actually turned out to be the plan of God to spread the Gospel. And when we're spread and when we're scattered and when we're persecuted, it's actually maybe, just maybe, there's a sovereign God over the universe who's got a plan for all of your suffering, for all of your circumstances, for all of your difficulty.

[54:58] And what He says to them in the dispersion is charis. Cairo. Blessings of joy to you.

What? I've been scattered. I am suffering. I'm being persecuted. James, do you have no idea what I'm going through?

Oh, I've got an idea. It was James who was in Jerusalem. James who was in Jerusalem when the persecution came.

But it was James who was in Jerusalem and stayed when the persecution came. He wasn't scattered. He continued to preach Christ in Jerusalem.

And so we have the evidence of that all through the book of Acts. I can find it in my notes. And He demonstrated this.

[56:05] He demonstrated that yes, we can preach Christ and have joy and rejoice in our scattering scattering because we're there to scatter the love of Christ. Acts 8.1 after the martyrdom of Stephen, it says that they were scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria except the apostles and James was still there.

When the church is scattered, James stood his ground. When Paul is converted and the persecution from the persecution that he instigated, he comes back to Jerusalem to find who? Galatians 1. James, still there. Three years later, still preaching the Gospel. He's faithful to the Gospel even after the persecution was at its most intense point.

Can you trust Christ when you're scattered? And with that scattering comes a lot of suffering. James, do you really understand my suffering?

Well, I might have an idea. So that I can speak from experience, he says in James 2.6, but you who have dishonored the poor are not the rich, the ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court?

[57:24] What's this reference to? This is the reference to those Jews who were dragging into court in Jerusalem all of the believers from their households. And it was the rich of the Jews who were bringing the persecution on the poor and he's reminding them, hey, remember what happened there?

Yeah, I was there. I suffered through it. Some of the most difficult times to see people lose their homes. People to be murdered and martyred.

And I'm still preaching the Gospel. And I'm still filled with joy. And I'm still filled with happiness. And I can still tell you, Cairo, blessings to you, all you who are scattered.

All you who are suffering. So that he can even say in James 5, be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth being patient about it until he receives the early and the late rains.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against each other, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold, the judge is standing at the door as an example of suffering and patience himself.

[58:39] Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. How can he say that? Because I've been blessed.

I've suffered. I've struggled. I've struggled. I can say, in verse 2, in a play on words from the Cairo of greeting in the original language to when he says, count it all joy to the charis.

I'm giving you greetings of joy out of suffering myself. So I can tell you in James 1, 2, count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds.

I've persevered. And I can tell you, I'm blessed. So are you. Question is, does your faith work?

Does it work? That could be a pragmatic question. Does it work? Does it work for me? How's that working for you? You know? Is that working out okay for you?

[59:59] The way that you've been practicing your faith in Christ? Or have you seen Christ for who he really is? Have you seen him as Savior and Lord Messiah?

So that the way you see him affects the way you serve him. Because I'm just telling you, any theology that does not work its way out into the preaching of Christ in your life is not getting you to heaven.

The reality is that the joy in your heart enables you to overcome the circumstances of your life so that in your struggling and in your scattering and in your suffering, no matter the circumstances, you've got everything you need for life and godliness.

And it works. And the faith inside works its way out and is evident outwardly in your life. I'm not doing good works so that I can be saved.

I'm doing good works because I'm saved. I've got joy in my heart. It's not mustered up so that I can gain favor with God. I've already got favor with God because of the finished work of Jesus.

[61:10] And because of that, I can have joy no matter my circumstances. I'm telling you, that's a gospel that will preach in our generation.

That's a gospel that calls us to something greater. A gospel that calls us to something more. And something substantial that will change your life.

Have you been changed? It's going to be a good study. It begs a question in your life because you can be in church all your life and be raised in a Christian home, have the best parents in the world and still be an unbeliever.

But when the gospel is preached and you see Jesus for who He is, it'll change you. It'll rock you to your core.

And if it hadn't changed you, man, friend, what in the world would keep you from surrendering your life to a king like that?

[62:19] It'll turn a sibling into a servant. It'll turn a skeptic into a servant.

And it'll change you forever. So we're coming to our invitation time now. This is transition moment. We don't preach the word to no end. We're preaching the word and we're getting together to hear the word, to hear what God has to say. And maybe God spoke to you today. There was word.

Well, how do I know God spoke to me? Well, I think if there's an unusual drawing in your heart to want to be closer to Jesus, I can almost assure you that the devil didn't do that.

I'm no genius. But I'm telling you, if in your heart you are compelled to surrender your life and turn from sin and turn to Jesus, I want to promise you, the demons aren't doing that.

[63:30] The only way you come to Jesus is if the Holy Spirit draws you. And the only way your eyes are open to the truth of the Gospel and your need for Jesus is if Jesus shakes you from your death.

And if He shakes you from your death, your response to Him being Savior is to repent. And your response to Him being Messiah is to believe.

And your response to Him being Lord is to follow Him. And if you can just have the strength today to surrender your life to Jesus, what I'm telling you is you'll be changed today and forever.

You'll never be the same. You'll never face circumstances the same way. You'll be tempted to from time to time. You may stumble here and there, but I'm telling you the trajectory of your life will change from this day forth and forever.

That's the Gospel. That's good news. But what do I do? And you respond. And what that means is you pray to God.

[64:41] The Scripture says if I confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in my heart that God has raised Him from the dead, I shall be saved. To believe in my heart, to believe is faith.

I'm putting my faith in the work of Christ. I'm seeing Him for who He is. I'm turning from sin. I'm believing in Him. I'm committing to follow with my life. And in a moment of prayer you can do that right where you're at.

I don't have to do that. I'm not like the priest interceding for you. There's one intercessor between God and man that is Christ Jesus the righteous. And if Christ is drawing your heart today then you respond in faith and you'll be changed.

And as we pray, you do that. You surrender your life. If you've already done that, praise the Lord. Man, it's time for you to stir the fire. Hear the truth of God's Word and get after it.

Realize that the circumstances of your life are nothing in comparison to what we have ahead.

You've got everything in Christ. I have every head bowed, every eye closed as we come to this invitation time.

[65:45] And if that's you this morning and you're ready to surrender and you're saying, okay, I've played games long enough and I'm surrendering my life. Then even right now, to yourself, you just, you go to God in response to what He's doing and you say, God, I'm a sinner.

I've been separated from you because of my sin. And I need you. And I ask you to come in. Forgive me of my sin.

I'm turning from it. I'm surrendering to you as Lord, Messiah. I believe you are who you said you are. You died for my sin. You rose again because you're not just a good teacher.

You're the Son of God. I need you. If you'll come in and change me, I'll give you my life. Father, I pray for anyone who's struggling through that right now who's saying to themselves, I can't be acceptable.

You don't know what I've done, Lord. Well, Lord, we know that you do know what they've done. And you said, whosoever. And that means them.

[67:07] So today, Lord, my prayer is that you would just draw them to the place of surrender. To recognize you for who you are in their life and that they would turn and be transformed.

And Lord, the Scripture says that if they put their trust in you that way, they become a new creation. The old passes away and all things become new. Sins forgiven. Life transformed. Future bright. And I pray, Father, that they would just in this moment just surrender that to you.

Be changed. And Lord, for the believer here this morning that is stumbling through this life and keeps stumbling over the same sins and temptations and they've surrendered their life but they're being tempted in so many ways, I just pray that the Lord Jesus Christ would be seen for who He is as the sovereign King of our life and that victory would be had in every one of those areas today. That every one of those trials would be just surrendered to you. That every one of those temptations would be surrendered. That all of the worry and all of the grief and all of the anger and all of the bitterness and all of the things that keep surfacing over and over and over would be surrendered at the foot of the cross.

[68:40] And Lord, that you would just bring healing that only you can bring. Lord, I pray that you would just show yourself mighty today.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Let's all stand this invitation time. We're going to sing and you do business with God. You respond how you need to respond. If you pray, God bless you.