

Text

James 1:1

*James, a servant^[a] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:
Greetings.*

Let us Pray

OT reading – Ps 26

NT reading – Acts 15:1-21

Main Point

Hijacked by Faith

To promote a life consistent with Faith In Christ Jesus

Introduction (300)

Hook

Story of James Martyred

I want to tell you about the murder of a just man.

His friends called him just at any rate. He was known as James the Just.

James, you see was known for loving the Law of God, for upholding the law of God and encourage others to live out the law of God.

- He was known for helping orphans and widows.

- Knows for trusting God in the face of trial.
- Known for being a man of prayer and a man of Faith

But as much as he loved the Law of God, He loved the Son of God more. He loved, followed and served our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now James, as you can imagine, was well loved in Jerusalem, but not by all.

There was a man by the name of Ananus, who thanks to friends in high places, became High Priest at the time.

Now Ananus was **not** a good man and was known for having a temper and being insolent.

Josephus tells us that shortly after being appointed as High Priest, Ananus wanted to exercise his authority. He wanted to flex his new found power.

So where does he turn to for his ego trip? To none other than James and his companions.

History tells us that James and his companions were brought before the Jewish court and accused of breaking the law. If it was anything like Jesus's trial we can imagine the lies and the false witnesses.

James and his companions were subsequently condemned and stoned to death.

In this way James the just was murdered.

Link to Sermon outline

But what led to this man being murdered by a power hungry man?

Why would one who loved the law so dearly be condemned for breaking that law. The answer is simple.

You see his life was hijacked. It was hijacked by Faith. By Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we begin our study in the Book of James and we will spend a bit of time thinking about the life of James and how **his** course was hijacked by Faith.

We will also think about the original recipients of the letter. We will see that their security was crumbling, and how their security too, needed to be hijacked by faith

So this evening I really want us to think about A Life Hijacked by Faith.

I say hijacked because, from our perspective we want to hold the wheel, and we will fight for control. But in this sense the hijacker is the good guy, saving us from destruction.

If you are a Christian, your life has been hijacked by faith. If you have yet to trust in Christ, listen carefully because Christ can lead you to eternal life, if you will let him.

Our outline today is very simple:

Outline

Your course Hijacked

Your security Hijacked

Part 1 – Your course Hijacked

Exposition

So let us begin, looking at Your Course Hijacked.

Faith in the promises of God drastically alters the course of your life. We see this clearly illustrated by the author of this letter.

Brother

You see James grew up in a pretty normal home. He had a mom and a dad. He had an older brother and younger siblings. They lived in the country and his dad worked his trade. Life was hard under the Roman rule, but it was good to be alive.

But in another way his home was anything but normal. You see his older brother was Jesus Christ himself. Sure, technically it was his half-brother, but that would have made no difference.

Imagine having Jesus as an older brother! Talk about making you look bad. Even a well-disciplined, well trained, soft willed child would appear like a menace compared to Jesus.

We can only imagine how the childhood would have gone, but in Mark 6:3 we read of Jesus' siblings, and James is listed as the first.

The people of Nazareth are offended at Jesus' bold claims and teaching and they say:

*³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of **James** and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

Sceptic

And when Jesus started his earthly ministry James looked on, and he was more than a bit sceptical.

His brother, with whom he had learned carpentry, and with whom he had learned to memorize Torah, was trying out his hand as a Rabi. He was teaching around the country side and getting a bit of a following.

You can imagine James and his brothers thinking Jesus was being a bit presumptuous. He was aiming a bit above his station. These miracles people talked about were no doubt clever tricks. After all they knew their brother best, and he was one of them.

We get a note of this patronizing attitude in John 7:2-5, where they give him advice dripping with sarcasm:

² Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. ³ So his brothers^[a] said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."

⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.

In Mark 3:21, we read that James and the rest of the family reach the point where they conclude that Jesus must be crazy. What has happened to our brother. We must intervene and help him.

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

Even when Jesus is Crucified, none of the accounts say that his brothers are there. His mother yes, his disciples yes. But not his siblings.

Servant

But then something changed.

Notice how James introduces himself at the start of the Letter:

James 1:1

James, a servant^[a] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

That is a long way from patronising disbelief and calling his brother crazy.

Here he identifies himself as a servant, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What changed? What convinced the sceptic brother to become a faithful follower?

I think we get a big clue of that in 1 Cor 15:7

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Jesus appeared to James personally after his resurrection!

It's hard to imagine the interaction. The turmoil of emotion in James heart. The joy of seeing his brother alive. The guilt of having taunted him. The wonder that what he said was all true. The shame of being blind to all the signs. The awe of being in the presence of the King of king.

“Hello Brother”

And James' life would never be the same again.

Servant – Doulos

I want you to note something about the word “Servant” James uses in his greeting.

The Greek word we have translated as Servant is Doulos. Doulos refers to one who is born into slavery. One who has been a slave from the start of his life. There is another Greek word which speaks of one becoming a slave, one who get’s placed into slavery, but that is not the word James uses.

He says he was born a slave. He makes the point to say that he has been born again, and born as a slave of Jesus Christ.

As a slave, he is deprived of all personal freedom, totally under the control of his master. He owes absolute loyalty and obedience to his master

That is how he chooses to introduce himself : One born again under the total control of his master, Jesus Christ.

He could have leant in to his position in the church
“James the leader of the church in Jerusalem”

Or he could have highlighted his esteemed family
“James the brother of our Lord”

But no, he identifies himself as a Slave of Jesus Christ.

He knows he has honour, not based on who he is, but based on who he serves.

Leader

James did have reason to boast about his position in the Church.

In Gal 2:9 James is listed alongside John and Peter as the “pillars” of the church.

And in Acts 12:17, after Peter is miraculously rescued from prison, who is specifically to be informed? None other than James.

And when questions arise about how Gentiles are to be welcomed into the church, who do we see presiding over the first church council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 (13, 14,19)?

None other than James, the brother of our Lord. His word holds weight. His opinion holds authority. He is well respected.

Martyr

James’ life ended abruptly and violently, as we have seen already. The year was around AD 62. James would have been in his mid 60s.

Summary

As we think about the life of James, we see that he was many things. He was Brother, Sceptic, Servant, Leader and Martyr, all for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in his life we can see that Faith in the One True God hijacked his life beyond what he could have imagined.

And this faith brought him blessings beyond his imagination. He was redeemed. Redeemed from himself. Redeemed from Sin. Redeemed into the eternal family of God.

Application

Blood lines do not assure salvation

As we think about James and his life one thing screams out to us.

Our family ties cannot save us. James had to be born again to be called a Son of God.

Children, this is so important for you to hear. You are not saved because your parents are saved. You, personally, must believe in Jesus for you to be saved. You must be born again to be saved. The very brother of Jesus needed to be born again. How much more is that true to you?

But this is true to anyone who has been raised in a Christian home or with a Christian heritage, regardless of age. Let this be we a warning for your too.

It is not enough to be in the same house, or to have gone to the Christian school, or to be in a nation with a Christian culture.

You must acknowledge your sin and trust in what Christ has done to be saved.

How do you identify yourself?

Another thing I want us to think about as we consider the life of James is how he identifies himself.

How does that compare with the way you identify yourself?

What is your default way to introduce yourself? What does that tell you about where you place your identity?

Do you identify yourself with your job? With what you do? “Hello my name is Smith, and I’m an a pilot”

Or do you identify yourself with your achievements? What you have done? “Hello my name is Jill, and I ran an iron man”

Do you identify yourself with your family? “Hello my name is Bill, I’m the brother of this famous chap”

Or maybe you identify yourself with your stuff? “ Hello my name is Tom, and I own that boat and that car.”

Now I know we are a bit more sophisticated as we identify with these things. But you know your own heart. You know how easy it is to slip into conversation what you want people to know about you.

Or do you identify yourself with who you serve? With who’s slave you are?

Do you identify yourself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? As one who owes total loyalty and total allegiance to Jesus. One who worships God in everything they do?

Is that what you want people to identify you with. Is that what your heart want’s to be identified with?

To identify as the servant of Christ, is not the intuitive life. It is a course hijacked by faith.

Is that true for you? Has your course been hijacked by faith?

Part 2 – Your Security Hijacked

Exposition

The recipients

Let us move on to our second point, Your Security Hijacked by Faith.

We all turn to something or someone for security. This is revealed especially when things are hard. When times are tough. When the pressures of life squeeze us.

As we think of where we find our security in life, I want us to think of the recipients of this letter.

In verse 1 we read that James is writing

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:

James is writing to Jewish Christians who are scattered far from home.

And as we read through the letter, we find that these Jewish Christians are facing trials. Facing economic hardship and oppression from employees and others.

The normal places they would have looked for security were crumbling away.

The comfort of extended family and people they knew: Gone.

The assurance of regular pay: Gone.

A legal system they understood that protected them from oppression: Gone

These false securities needed to be hijacked by Faith so that they would have true security. True comport. True peace.

Using faith as an excuse to sin

But it seems there was another kind of false security that needed to be hijacked. The recipients of the letter seem to have a false sense of security of being saved.

They said they believed certain things, but their actions did not line up with their words.

James writes to them to save them from this fatal misunderstanding. They said they were Christians, but they were not living as “little Christs” as it were. There was no imitation of Christ.

Some people were using the slogan “*Justified by Faith Alone*” to neglect Christian Holy living. James pushes back on this. He challenges it and confronts it.

Now we like that statement, because we know what we mean by it. But sadly, people can say the same words, but mean completely different things. Even opposing things by the same word.

We will explore this further when we reach chapter 2, but to understand that this slogan was used in the wrong way, it is important to note when the Letter of James was written.

Date

The Letter of James is the very first book written of the New Testament. Scholars place the writing somewhere between AD 44 and AD 49.

Why is this significant? First think of what has not happened yet.

- The other Letters of the NT do not exist yet.
- The Jerusalem council has not happened yet.
- The controversy about Gentile Christians has not been addressed yet.
- The discussions with Paul about missions to the Gentiles has not happened yet.
- James has not even met Paul, let alone discussed with him what **He** means by “Justified by faith alone”.

All of these things are in the future.

But the second significance about the date of the letter is what has happened. Paul has been preaching the Gospel. In Tarsus as early as AD 36 and in Antioch beginning in AD 45.

Confusion normal

So it is probably from Paul that this slogan originated. But we also know from Paul's letters that people were quick to take the Gospel of Grace and twist it for their own use.

We know people can hear the Gospel of Grace and twist it to make it into a set of rules that must be obeyed to be saved. They twist the Gospel into legalism.

Or people can twist the Gospel of Grace to justify their sin, to justify what they want to do instead of what God wants of them. They twist the gospel into antinomianism.

And it seems the people James was writing to were the latter. They were using the truths about the Gospel to justify their sin.

Pressure shows true faith

The trials of economic and social hardship forced this reality to the forefront.

When under pressure the true colours were being revealed. All of these sinful things were coming out of their hearts, and they wanted to justify themselves in their sinful responses. As we read through the letter we read of all sorts of things which come out of their hearts.

- Uncontrolled speech
- Quarrels
- Quick to be angry
- Showing partiality
- Wrong use of money
- Wrong use of time
- Pride
- Wickedness
- Filthiness

Under the pressure of the trials, these Christians were showing their friendship with the world. The pressures of life were revealing what was truly in their hearts.

And it was not a strong Faith in God that was revealed. In fact it was quite the opposite.

Their supposed “faith” they were hoping would save them was empty and void. They were not clinging to the promises of God. They were clinging to the promises of the world. So much so that James calls them “*You adulterous people*”. They were betraying their saviour in the vilest way possible.

So, James writes to them so that their security would be Hijacked by Faith. Hijacked by true saving faith in the one True God.

Application

Specific example of anger

Are we any different from the original recipients of the letter?

Think about Anger.

Are you quick to get angry? Are you quick to get annoyed? Do you find yourself being frustrated by those around you? Maybe at work? Or in the family, or in the church?

Whatever it is you want, that thing is not happening, and you are getting more and more angry.

Now you are pretty good at hiding things, and covering it up, but it leaks every now and then right?

- Slandering the boss with your colleagues
- A harsh tone to your child
- Snapping at your spouse
- Coldness towards people in the church family
- Or even outright outburst of anger when in private

And you might even justify your anger by saying that the other one was in the wrong. That they made you angry.

Surely, I can indulge in a bit of anger, I'm justified by faith alone after all. You are convinced that what you want is of utmost importance. And you are prepared to

sin to get it or at least let people know how unhappy you are.

This is worldly thinking. This shows friendship with the world. These things show we still need to be transformed and conformed to the Image of Christ. And James loves us enough to address these things.

Let me give you a taster. James 4:1-4

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^[a] are at war within you?^[b] ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! ^[c] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Friends we are in a foreign land with many pressures that squeeze us.

What comes out of your heart when you get squeezed?

Is it anger?

Is it fear?

Is it anxiety?

Is it foolish talk?

Do you run to distractions? To pleasure?

Do you turn to things of this world for relief? Do you turn to the things of this world to justify your actions?

Faith comes out under pressure

Or is it faith that comes out of your heart when under pressure? Faith in the one true God? Faith in the one who is good and wise and kind. Faith in the one who holds every molecule under his authority?

When you get squeezed by life, is the glory of God revealed? Does your trust and faith in him declare who he is?

When anger and frustration would be the expected response, do you instead respond with patience and thanksgiving?

Do the pressures of life reveal that your security is firmly based in the One true God and nothing else?

Friends this is not a normal response. This response is only possible when your securities have been hijacked by Faith. Only then will you be truly secure.

Conclusion

We need help to think like this and live like this. We need divine help. This is a complete shift in our way of thinking and living.

Thank be to God that He has given us his word. And specifically thank God we have the Book of James which helps us in incredibly specific and practical ways.

As we close I want you to remember something important about the life of James and the letter of James.

We know James was named “James the Just” because he loved God’s law. And we can’t imagine he was

perfect but we can very well presume that James put his own letter into practice in his own life.

His life would have oozed from good works flowing from a saving faith. He showed his love for his Saviour by clear and consistent obedience.

Yet how did his life end? He was brutally murdered. He was stoned to death.

Remember the goal of a life hijacked by Faith is not prosperity, health, or long life.

The goal is much better than that.

The Goal is Redemption.

The Goal is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ to enjoy him forever.

This is the life we will learn from the book of James.

This is a Life hijacked by Faith.

Let us pray.