

Computer Generated Transcript - So this morning we're going to launch into a new series we been talking about just ordinary people an extraordinary God but we're going to start this week on a study of James it was actually funny when I went home in July when home for July fourth weekend to Montana and I went to my sister's church there and their church was going through a study and James was actually really cool in a couple weeks when we get to that section of scripture it might be a little bit of some of what Pastor Matt said he's one it was one of my closest friends I love that guy and he preached a great sermon on this and it just happened to coincide I'd already decided that we were going to be doing James and it was a neat thing to kind of go and hear somebody else doing it as well and so we're going to walk through the letter to James as we go through today is going to be a little different because I want to give you a lot of overview I want to give you some background into this letter because it's so important for us to understand context and those things as we go through Scripture so we don't just take things out of context and make Scripture say whatever we want to do right I mean it's Christian greeting card company God bless them but they've been horrible at taking the Bible and making it say things that it was never meant to say OK by lifting a verse out of context and just saying whatever right how many you or an athlete or you see you heard talk about well I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength and they talk about it in a way like it's going to help them dunk a ball better right or run faster or something like that that book is of or that that verse is about contentment Paul is saying whether I have a whole bunch of stuff or whether I have nothing I'm going to be content with who God is because he gives me the strength to do that right it has nothing to do with sports right how many of you have heard of her the first by His stripes they feel they'll be healed right and we talk about that as we're praying that God would physically heal someone OK go to Isaiah and looked up what God is actually talking about when he says by His stripes will be healed is spiritually you'll be reconnected with God through Jesus stripes OK that verse really has nothing to do with physical healing I'm sorry to burst some of your bubbles and you can I mean you can pray and believe I mean God or Jesus sacrifice absolutely brought about healing and those kind of things but that's not what that verse is saying it's talking about us being spiritually reconnected with God to be spiritually healed the Bible is full of amazing verses about a variety of subjects and a lot of times we grab the wrong ones to make our point you know what I'm saying and so I absolutely believe in healing I absolutely believe in those things I just think that's a bad verse to look at for it OK there's lots of other good ones and so as we go through James I want to make sure you understand the context of this letter so that we can make sure that we're using it appropriately that we're learning about it appropriately that we're not trying to make it say something it doesn't say so I'm going to ask you for just a few moments what is something you know about the letter of James. Nothing awesome OK No come on what something like I want you to say thought to talk a lot I'm giving you permission to talk in church while the pastor is right now OK so why there is something that you know about James still nothing it's a good thing we're going through this letter that's that's that's good faith lots to do with faith he talks about faith over and over and over again in James James we're going to talk about that I firmly believe and most scholars would agree that James is the brother of Jesus OK this isn't probably James the son of thunder the disciple This is James the younger brother of Jesus OK yeah we'll talk about that because that comes into play a little bit what else what was that blessings he talks about blessings in this yeah lots of warnings you know the power of prayer Yes Forever righteous man what else something to stay away from yeah. Get rid of the evil and filth in our lives so James is called by most scholars the practical book of wisdom in the New Testament OK when a lot of scholars like when a lot of biblical scholars list James they don't list that isn't a pistol they're listed as one of the wisdom books even though it's in the New Testament OK James is called it's called that it's called the practical letter in the New Testament it is full of practical wisdom James deals more with ethics than any other letter in the New Testament All right James is one of if not the first thing that was written at the earliest date in the New Testament All right most scholars date James at about eighty four four is when it was written and began circulating fourteen fifteen years probably even less than after Jesus died OK I mean this is this is an early early letter some people dated at a later time and that's

fine but I believe again just in studying and looking at these things that that earlier date makes sense. There's a lot of reasons for that that I want to certainly get into but it's one of the earliest ones written by a brother of Jesus I want you to stop but I want you to think about that for just a second and we've talked about this a little bit what would it be like to be the brother of Jesus right I mean like the younger sibling of the only sinless person who has ever walked on the face of the earth right like that's a lot of pressure right I mean how many of you were compared unfavorably to an older brother or sister out there right like your older brothers sister you know they did stuff and you were like yeah I just don't quite measure up or whatever I mean we all have that happen why you sometimes the older is get compared to the younger is too right like they don't even have a personality had They're not walking They're like How come you don't do this right you know it's funny how how life goes but can you imagine like Jesus would have been the only one that this ever would have been true of why can't you be more like your brother in just not ever make mistakes right I mean that you can you imagine the pressure of can you imagine how weird it must have been can you appreciate the strangeness of the fact that James had to pray to his brother for salvation for healing for miracles for what like brother please come into my heart. And forgive me of not can you appreciate the strangeness of that moment right how weird that would be right for James now we know that James when Jesus was alive before his his his his crucifixion James was not a follower of Jesus isn't a matter of fact James and his brothers come to Jesus and they try and get him to leave the ministry right you many of you know that section of scripture they say you need to come and take care of our mom you know you are abandoning your responsibilities as the oldest son you need to come take care of Mary All right and Jesus talk said that weird moment of you know you know who is my brother and who is my mother and all and all of these different things but they try and get him to stop now it's amazing if you look through if you look in X. you know I chapter one and it actually lists some of the people that are in the upper room and it talks about Mary and it talks about it talks about. The apostles and it talks about the brothers of Jesus are in the upper room for for that that moment in Acts when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit they're some of the ones who are there the brothers of Jesus are in that room James Paul actually tells us in first Corinthians Chapter fifteen that Jesus appeared after is death and resurrection to James like he was one of the ones that got an appearance from Jesus Christ and it was that that convinced James that Jesus was who he said he was I mean and I think that most of us would get that right like it's weird when your older brother says I'm the son of God but your older brother also said I'm going to die and I'm going to rise again and then you watched him die or at least your mom watched him die and then you saw him after that happened that would probably convince you oh my brother might have known what he was talking about so James chooses Jesus and he follows him James also becomes the pastor of the Jerusalem church he is the leader of the Jerusalem church Paul calls him one of the pillars of the church and according to the church historians they list James as one of the three pillars with Paul Peter and James he becomes that important to the New Testament church when Paul comes back and there's the Council of Jerusalem and they're talking about what needs to happen with with Christians do we have to make Christians choose to be Jews who do they go to James Peter doesn't make that decision Paul doesn't make that decision James through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the one that they go to to make that decision All right James is known as the camel to anyone tell me why church historian is calling the camel according to church history he spent so much time on his knees in prayer that his knees were so calloused that they looked like Cal that they looked like camels knees because he spent so much time in prayer to his brother that his knees callous and they looked like camels knees James was martyred. For his faith he was the leader of the church the church of Jerusalem he was in his place of prayer on a roof and some religious leaders some Jewish leaders came and found him and they threw him off the roof and he didn't die so then they beat him with clubs until he died. Because he refused to not pray to his brother OK So there's so much history as you look at this Martin Luther has one of my favorite quotes on the book of James he calls it a book of straw. As a young man Martin Luther said that the Book of James had no value whatsoever and he said it's all just full of of stuff and it doesn't have anything to do with the gospel and as

Martin Luther grew an age he said that it was a book of great value in his older life but as a young man he called it a book of straw which I think is funny I don't think I'd have the guts to call any book of the Bible a book of straw and call it useless but apparently Martin Luther did it and but he changed his mind like I said as he got older and he does that this is a letter though that is all about and listen you need to hear this because if you don't hear this moment right now the it's really easy to take James out of context James as a letter all about maturity in the faith and you know what's amazing as we look through the through the letter of James is you're going to find very very few you know don't smoke don't drink don't do this and make sure you do this this and this it's all about these ethical things it's not necessarily specific there's going to be some of that in there but when James is about maturity in the faith it's all about how we view Jesus how we handle ourselves in the world how we deal with problems how all of this stuff comes about James is a letter about maturity was written you can see was written very early in the church's history you can see in verse one wanted says it's to the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad what would happen is a big wave of persecution had come the Christians were scattered and they all started to plant little churches but what had what they missed is even though they knew who Jesus was they were all a bunch of babies they were all a bunch of baby Christians who didn't really know what mature faith looked like and so they started fighting about everything. Paul has to write letters over and over again to correct their theology James writes a letter that helps correct just their thinking he's writing a letter to help people know what mature faith in Jesus Christ looks like so here's my deal this morning if you're in here and you have never chosen Jesus this whole church thing is all new to you there is hope to grow in our relationship with Jesus if you are one of those people who was born in a church pew one hundred fifty years ago and you have never missed a Sunday and you have grown in your face steadily there is room to grow to be more mature in our faith to allow God This speaks to us in the change our hearts that is what this book is about you're going to talk a lot about a mature in our faith the Bible talks about this moving from milk to meat as a child moves from milk to me striving for growth is a common thing theme of the Gospel how it uses athletic athletic terms that it's requires effort to grow in our faith you're not going to just sit somewhere and somehow become stronger in your faith it requires perseverance it requires will it requires choices it requires us to move in a direction that God would have us move so what does it look like James is going to give us some answers James also uses the word and I want you to hear this James uses the word perfect several times in this letter one four percent one seventeen one twenty five to twenty two three two he says in three two we can be a perfect man and when I say what he's saying that is not a sinless man OK that Word Perfect means complete or mature. OK you are never this side of heaven going to become fully Senlis right you're never going to attain a point where you become Jesus this side of heaven you can be forgiven you know what I mean but it's not until we're in heaven Well that's finally going to one hundred percent transform our lives but we can become complete and mature and when you see the word perfect in here that is what that is talking about all right and I want you to I want you to hear that you will be balanced you will be grown in your faith that's what's going to happen all right so I want you to hear he writes the letter to strengthen Jewish Christians who are in the midst of trials who are in the midst of persecution as we're going to talk about that he writes a whole section of this letter to correct a misunderstanding of what Paul wrote and what Paul was teaching He's not contradicting Paul when he writes this he's giving clarity to what Paul said they both talk about Paul talks about one thing James talks about another thing it's both sides of the same thing OK and he's clarifying what Paul is teaching when he does that and he wants to pass down to the first generation of Christians just a wealth of practicality just practically what does it mean to follow Jesus and so you need to get all that right so James one one OK if you haven't figured out we're going to be in James OK open your Bible to James and we're going to read James one one and then we're going to get to two to four here in just a moment All right James one one says this is a letter from James a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ I am writing to the twelve tribes Jewish believers scattered abroad Greetings All right now I want you to to think about this again for just a second this is James the brother of Jesus and he uses the word do last which is a Greek word that

means slave by choice. OK In this time most slavery was not based upon race at least amongst the Jews the Romans were the Romans were were that way but slavery at this time was not based upon race slavery at this time was based upon financial hardship right you couldn't pay somebody back something you borrowed you became their slave until you earned enough money basically to pay off your debt at the end of that time some slaves were so on love with their masters and so in love with their masters family and they felt like they had a better way of living in this way than another way they would choose to become that master slave by choice Their do loss they would have their ear pierced they would usually have the house symbol in that piercing and they chose to stay in that home OK that's the word that James uses to describe his relationship with his brother I am his slave by choice I don't know about you I was the oldest So this thought never would have occurred to me but I cannot imagine one of my siblings being like yeah I'd like to be Jason slave right now I took them that way sometimes you know as older brother I force them to do things they didn't want to do and all those kind of things because that's my job as an older brother OK You younger siblings are like You're so mean yeah older siblings you know what I'm talking about right yeah you follow me all right so he is the slave by choice to his brother it's a strange thing that he's writing again to these twelve tribes who are scattered right it's such an important thing to understand all those things I want you guys to to hear in this when Jewish believers were scattered in that first wave of persecution you can see it in Acts one eight one four it really is the sowing of the Gospel in all these different places right I genuinely believe that that dispersion was necessary they had to get these Christians out of Jerusalem OK and they had to get them out into these other places and so God you something is horrible is persecution to accomplish his agenda I'm not saying God caused it you understand I'm saying God used it and they were dispersed to the four corners of the Roman Empire and actually you can trace it about how from the Jewish dispersion Christians went north right and you can actually track it historically these Christians moving north and north and north and then then moving west and you see him hit France and you see him hit Spain and then you see him finally get up to England and then those three countries decided to colonize the known world and explore and they brought their faith all way from Jerusalem to America and here we sit. OK this is a big deal but they're spread all over the place so they've got this brand new religion historians say that there is no reason whatsoever by man that Christianity should have made it out of the first century with the massive waves of persecution in a new religion they said it should have died out in the first century and should have never never made it past that but guess what Jesus is bigger than what historians think should be possible and we're sitting here today because God had another idea James one two three four we're going to get into what maturity looks like right now OK we're going to start we're all going to do a couple verses a day will do more as we go on I'm not going to take such small portions of Scripture every other time but I want you to this is honestly to me this is some of the hardest verses in the Bible just to get started on week one OK I mean this is this is some of the hardest things to live out and you'll see why in just a second I'm going to be James one versus two through four Dear brothers and sisters when troubles of any kind come your way consider it an opportunity for great joy that that's enough right there right like we can just stop reading and be like OK I'm not as good at this as I'd like to be for you know that when your faith is tested your insurance has a chance to grow so let it grow for when your insurance is fully developed you'll be perfect what does that mean complete mature you'll be perfect and complete needing nothing your brothers and sisters when troubles of any kind come your way consider it an opportunity for joy how many of you that's your first response right hard times come when you're like yes here we go now I that's not me brothers and sisters count it joy when trials counted Joy what is mature faith look like mature faith looks like a faith that isn't hindered by trials of faith that isn't isn't dependent on smooth sailing a faith that actually. Finds joy in the midst of struggle so some of you find yourselves having followed Jesus for a long time you're still not so good at this mean either this is part of what mature faith looks like but he doesn't just tell you to do something that seems stupid he tells you how right he tells you how to find joy in the midst of trials like I said this is not just some theoretical exercise this is a book of practical wisdom so as you look back at those verses how can we find joy in

the midst of suffering What's the recipe what endures perseverance listen I want you to to know I want you to see the first word OK for you know that is a word that is an imperative verb in the Greek and I know I just got on some of you right there so you heard like words that you didn't necessarily understand and you just shut down so let me let me talk again that means that James is telling them exactly what they need to do and if you do this things will happen James isn't saying just trying figure it out he said you need to know you need to make a decision to know if your choice to know but it's an important decision to know and you need to know in the middle of your of your struggle in the middle of your trouble that when your faith is tested you have a chance to grow so let it grow because when your insurance is developed you'll be perfect and complete. Nothing so the first thing about being able to handle struggles and still finding joy in them is to know that it's an opportunity to grow in your faith it doesn't say throw a party and have a good time in the middle of your struggle. Do you get that it doesn't say pretend to be happy and like everything is OK James makes no mention of anything fake in this decision he just says listen you need to know that this is a struggle and this struggle is real but through this struggle you can grow if you give it the opportunity to do that many of us even as followers of Jesus have had struggles that derailed our faith for a while that cause us to question things that never should have been question that caused us to stop doing things that we should have been doing and to start doing things that we had no business doing struggles came and it looked anything but joyful and it looked anything but it our life looked like anything but growth on the other side can I tell you that that's very human but it's very immature face that's hard to say because I've been there and I'll probably be there again at some point time but much sure faith finds joy in the midst of hardship because we know it's an opportunity to grow to be more like Jesus to find enduring us in the struggle to know God better on the back side and to be more like him through a struggle than we were before it happened if we choose to know that because in the moment you're given a choice right hard times come and you're given a choice I can either let it overwhelm me or I can choose Jesus I can choose to allow him to speak into this such you ation doesn't say everything's going to be easy at that point time it says that we're going to grow in insurance I said this last week I'm going to say it again many times many of us pray for miracles in things that God wants to develop us in through discipline. We ask God for a miracle of patience or a miracle of endurance we ask God for miracles of blessings we ask God to miraculously love people more we ask God to miraculously help us forgive we ask God to miraculously help us to treat our spouse and our kids better we ask God to miraculously do all of things and what God is actually going to say to you is you're going to have to make a choice to be better at this to be disciplined in good decisions in the midst of a struggle and that's how your growth is going to grow to be a better mom or dad that's how you're going to grow to be a better spouse that's how you're going to grow into forgiveness actual forgiveness not just pretending like nothing ever happened that's how you're going to grow in treating people with respect and kindness that's how you're going to grow in being a person who shares your faith it's not probably going to happen through some miraculous moment it's going to be God Look given you opportunity to actually make a decision in the struggle and make the right choice and to grow to mature to become complete in our faith people that think faith is for wimps clearly have never read the Bible this doesn't say there's nothing easy in what we just wrote wrote or read there's nothing easy in any of this but this explains how a dedicated Christian can have joy in the midst of the trials and it's because he lives he or she lives for what matters most Jesus said it was because of the joy or were told in Hebrews that Jesus for the joy set before him right was able to endure the sufferings of the cross because it wasn't about the cross it was about the more important things our values determine our of value our evaluations when we value material and physical things of this earth more than Jesus and who he says he is in the coming kingdom we will of course make wrong decisions and we will not find joy in trials. But would we value who Jesus is more than the material more than the things around us and when we value the future in the kingdom of God that is coming to us we will make right decisions here on Earth regardless of the situation what are your eyes set on no have an understanding mind your faith will be tested but testing is supposed to work for us not against us when we choose Jesus Paul said in

Romans eight twenty eight that we know all things work together for good all things not just good things all things he says and second Corinthians four seventeen for our light of affliction which is but our light affliction which is but for a moment works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory God knows and he spoke to us through Paul through James that trials rightly used will help us mature it will help us to find patience it will help us to find in duration it will help us to find the ability to keep going when things are tough are tough Romans five three through force as we glory in tribulations also knowing that tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope it's over and over and over again in scripture that Jesus tells us not to just muddle through trials but to find joy in them to know that God is with us in them and we can come out stronger through a trial than when we went in and that's how we find hope and joy in the midst of the struggle in the Bible patience is not a passive acceptance of our circumstances it is a courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty I want to read that again patience is not a passive acceptance of circumstances it is a courageous perseverance. In the face of suffering and difficulty and mature people are always impatient mature people will be patient and persistence impatience and unbelief almost always go together just as patience and faith almost always go together I know that this is a weighty way to start a series and I get it I was wrestling with it for the last probably month like maybe I can just leave out those verses and we can just do it over look on the first week just to make people laugh and smile and then we'll get into the tough stuff but this letter dives right into the tough stuff there is there is no hiding from this set of verses and if we can't begin to understand these first couple of verses nothing else we read through this entire letter is going to make any difference it's not going to if we are going to take it all out of context none of it's going to actually be rightly defined I'm not sure the Word of God will not return void Please don't misunderstand or take what I'm saying and run to the extreme what I'm saying is you will never fully understand the rest of this letter if you don't see start with verses one through four and let it marinate in your heart and is on comfortable is it can be it's right it's right not the best thing about all this is is Jesus never asked us to do it alone he came to this earth and he died and he rose listen if his brother can be convinced that he is the Son of God That right there should be enough to convince us and not only one to Jude the letter of Jude it was written by a brother of Jesus to he doesn't claim to be a brother of Jesus he says he's James brother this is James James the brother of Jesus so if you're Jude the brother of James and you're Jude the brother of Jesus but they don't ever claim that because they don't feel like it's something to claim this is a big deal but Jesus promises to be with us in the middle of all this. He promises to be our foundation in the midst of the storm our stronghold in the midst of struggle but it's a choice we have to make to look to him in the middle of all those things and instead of just staring at our surroundings listen Peter walked on water out to Jesus and instead of keeping his eyes on Jesus in the middle of that storm he takes his eyes off Jesus and he starts staring at all of his circumstances and he sinks and Jesus picks him back up out of the water now the bible doesn't say this this is my interpretation please don't mistake what I'm saying but I truly believe that when Jesus grabbed Peter's hand and pulled him up out of the water that Peter righted his vision and I truly believe he walked back to that boat with Jesus I cannot say that definitively that is my opinion please hear me on that but we do that in life so often were fixed on Jesus and then a storm comes or maybe it's not a storm maybe it's a season of ease and so instead of focusing on Jesus in a season of ease we start focusing on all the stuff that comes along with a season of ease and we take our eyes off Jesus and we just get complacent some of us in the storm start looking at the storm and sort of Jesus in the storm we can't figure out how we fail I want you to hear me today Jesus is here Jesus is with you I know this way today I understand that not only was it waiting and content we did a lot of like study today goddess here he's with you I want to hand out something Steve if you can come up here with the guys I don't know who you picked to come up John if you could come up here with me for a second and ask you guys to do something for me and I have these I didn't have them to you at the beginning because I didn't want you to be staring at this the whole time instead of listening to what we were talking about I don't know if you would ever really do that. Here you go one everybody to have one there should be more than enough you don't have to

count out in every row probably K. I want to give you a list this was actually handed to me we were at the pastors prayer fellowship this week we meet on the first Thursday of the month and another one of the pastors did the devotion this time the host pastor ever hosted does a devotion and it was Keith Puglisi and then he handed this out to all the pastors and just talked about evaluating our hearts and I thought this was a really cool list because a lot of times when we think of sin we think of you know like specific things right like we think about you know I when I was a kid I heard over and over and over again we don't smoke drink or chew or go with girls who do OK that was like the macho in my youth group and I'm not saying that's good I'm just saying that's what it was OK And so we think of sends us like this list of things OK instead of attitudes of the heart and I love this list because this is all about attitude this is all about heart issues so what I'm going to ask you to do here's how we're going to end if you've never heard Jesus before if you've never chosen him and you've never asked him to forgive you and he's never been a part of that in your life you've never made that decision I would love for you to come and talk to me at the end of this time I want to talk with you I want to pray with you I want to do those things if you don't feel comfortable talking to me about that find the person who brought you ask them your questions let them pray with you if you've never chosen Jesus that is the most important decision you could possibly make this morning and I don't want to short change that come and talk to me talk to the person that brought you ask them but if you're in here and you have already chosen Jesus and somebody who doesn't know Jesus isn't talking to you what I'm going to ask Greg to do is just turn on some really really quiet music I mean I don't want to hear much OK It is only eight fifty one it's nine minutes to twelve and what I'd like every single one of you who have chosen Jesus to do this morning if you haven't chosen Jesus this list is going to make no sense to you. I obviously said something stupid because people are laughing right now what I say it is not eight fifty one it is a level fifty one. Then hear it. All right so here's what I want you to do if you haven't chosen Jesus this list isn't a place to start where you need to start is Jesus OK if you have just chosen Jesus what I would like you to do is just take a few moments and read through this I'll tell you more than one of these things convicted my heart it's easy sometimes when we think of sin is just a list of do's and don'ts it's a lot more difficult when we break it down into ethical things like James does so what I want you to do is just take a few moments and look it over pray about it if you need to repent of some of the stuff repent if you need to go to somebody in this room and confess something confess maturity and faith will always require. An action on our part please don't misunderstand me you can't earn salvation he's going to get into that in James Chapter two you can't earn God's Love You can't earn forgiveness you can't earn salvation but once you've chosen the free gift of God. You have to make choices. That's a choose Jesus again and again. You have to find patience. That will allow him to bring about completeness. I'm just going to give you a few moments I'm a pray right now you need to go so be it. I'm encourage you to not leave until you've read through this and not leave until you've had a chance to pray about it. Allow got a chance to speak in your heart God you're good. I thank you for your work. I thank you Jesus for everything you've done in our hearts I thank you for everything that you did to make faith even. God I pray that you help us through storms. And through peaceful times to make decisions. To grow. To choose joy to choose maturity. And I pray it is my prayer that as we go through the letter of James you help each and every single one of us in this place to be more like you at the end of it than we were when we started. That's going to be different for every one of us because we're all different places right now. And I just pray that through this time through your words through what you're speaking. To help us to be more like. A man. A man you can go if you need to if you talk wait for the choir but I encourage you please. Don't go until you've given got a chance to speak.