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### **James: Faith at Work**

(First person narrative recitation of James in introduction to series)

Good morning brethren! I do like that word; “brethren”. You will discover I use the term a lot. I’m sure it includes all the “sistern” that are here as well included the body of Christ. “Brethren”, I like that term because it speaks of relationship, of community, of closeness. One can share even the hard truth in love with someone called a brother. Practical, blunt at times, to the point. I’m a guy who is not content with just talking about things. I want to put it into practice. I want to see it work. I will challenge anyone around me to walk your talk. I’m a guy who wants to see the beef behind the bun.

My name is James. Now I want to make sure you do not confuse me with other famous guys named James. One of Zebedees sons who was a fisherman and a disciple was named James. Remember Jesus called James and John, sons of Thunder. If you think I am bold and blunt and impulsive...just go on a hike from Galilee to Jerusalem with the two of them. That James was one of the first early on, to be killed by King Herod. There was actually another disciple named James, the son of Alpheus, was a very good man, but folks don’t hear a whole lot about him.

I am the James who had a very, very famous brother. Yep, I am James the younger brother of Jesus. Actually, Jesus was a half-brother. We had the same mother, her name was Mary. But we had different fathers. Where ever I go people always ask me, “What was it like to have Jesus as an older brother?” We could spend all morning talking about that, but I want to say that he was a great big brother...but I didn’t always appreciate it. You know how sometimes you don’t see how incredibly blessed you are by the people God has put right in your own home? Well, I admit there were times when I resented having Jesus as a

big brother. The teachers down at the synagogue always compared me to him. Lets face it, he was always perfect. He always did the right thing and there were times I just got tired of it. I didn't want to here it, "James, you just frustrate me some times, why can't you be like your older brother". He really was a great big brother. He taught me so much. I remember sitting with him on the back porch when I was very young and he taught me how to tie my sandals. He showed me how to swing a hammer just right out back in the carpentry shop. He taught me a lot about life. He always had a cheerful smile and I will never forget the kind twinkle in his eye. He never complained always encouraging. He was the neighborhood peacemaker, but strong...very strong.

In his early 30's Jesus grew restless and decided to leave the family business. He became an itinerant preacher in the lake district of Galilee. He would preach boldly about the coming kingdom of God. He was not afraid to condemn the local religious authority. To tell you the truth, at the time we all thought he was a bit crazy, the whole family did. It was like Jesus didn't care about what those in the town were saying about our family. It was like he had disowned us and had an entirely different family. In fact, that's exactly what he did have.

It wasn't until after Jesus was executed by those Romans and then rose up again and even appeared alive to me that I finally understood. I got it. My brother, Jesus was really the Son of God and Savior of the World. I guess I'm one of the best witnesses to that truth. You can't fake it at home. A brother knows everything. At first, I was blinded to the truth by my own ego and pride, but I'm here to tell you today Jesus is no fake, he is exactly what he claimed to be. I know its true because we shared a bedroom together, we worked side by side. He is the real thing, the perfect man, the true Son of God.

After Jesus was taken back up to heaven, I was among those who waited in the upper room until He sent the Holy Spirit down in power on the day of Pentecost. I became one of the main leaders in the church of

Jerusalem. The rock of persecution had dropped into our secure little pond of Jerusalem and splashed Jewish believers from all 12 tribes all across the world. After a dozen or so years had past since Jesus death, I became concerned with some things that I saw were happening in the church. So I decided to write an open letter to address some of these problems. I wanted to challenge believers that faith must work, it couldn't just be a mental game, faith couldn't just be words alone. Faith if it was real, would make a difference and it would inspire action. Genuine faith will produce a real change that can be seen in daily life. Faith will endure under trials. I know that no one is perfect...except my older brother of course...I wasn't going to preach on how to live a trouble free life, but how to live when the troubles hit. A strong faith in the midst of trials will build endurance. I wanted to write a letter that talks about a faith that keeps us sliding from temptation down into lust and sin. A faith that not only longs to hear the word, but actually dares to live it out. A faith that doesn't play favorites in the church. A faith that controls the tongue that small but extremely powerful part of the body. A faith that softens and heals relational conflicts and complaining against each other. A faith that builds unity in the body. A faith that gives us the power to resist the devil and at the same time draw near to God. A faith that gives us the eyes to see with hope that the Lord is coming back soon. A faith that believes that prayer really does make a difference.

I had all these things I wanted to share with the believers that had been splashed all across the world and so I believe God inspired me to sit down and write them out for all to hear. As I was writing it was as if God himself were speaking through me as I began. "James a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...greetings." (Recite the book of James in dramatic fashion)