

PREACHING FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

GEORGE B. DAVIS
Criswell College, Dallas, TX 75201

What's wrong with preaching today? Suggestions are as numerous as the analysts. But one deficiency which appears on the list of almost everyone is this--*the lack of substantial biblical content*. Much preaching today is devoid of solid biblical exposition. Consequently, the slow but steady resurgence of expository preaching evident today is most encouraging. Pastors, in increasing numbers, are recognizing that expository preaching, more so than any other type, leads a congregation into a submission to the Word of God.

Technically speaking, an expository sermon is one in which both major and subpoints are drawn directly from a passage of Scripture. Effective expository preaching comprises the thorough exegesis, relevant application, and vivid illustration of a given passage of Scripture. Expository preaching in its purest form is taking a book of the Bible and preaching through it paragraph by paragraph. The intent and purpose of this article is both to encourage and enable students and pastors to preach through the Book of James.

I. General Preparation

General preparation should be started several months before the series is to begin. General preparation should be done in at least five areas:

Step One: Thorough Familiarity With the Book

Read the Book of James through, not just once or twice, but numerous times. The use of cassette tapes is also recommended. Thorough familiarity with the epistle enables the preacher to make the sermons come alive in delivery.

Step Two: Gathering of Helpful Tools for Exposition

Every preacher must remember that no amount of scholarly research ever becomes a substitute for the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is far more important to become a "Bible student" than a "commentary student."

Nevertheless, we will want to avail ourselves of the most helpful tools at our disposal to make the Word of God both relevant and exciting for the people. The reader is encouraged to see the review article on bibliographic material for the study of James in this issue.

Step Three: Determine the Historical Background

When preaching through any book of the Bible, attention must always be given to such matters as: (1) authorship; (2) recipients, (3) date and place of writing; (4) theme and purpose; and (5) special or unique features.

In addition to the introductory material found in all major commentaries, dictionary and encyclopedia articles on both "James" and "The Epistle of James" will prove immensely profitable in ascertaining the historical background of the book.

Step Four: Develop a Paragraph Outline of the Book

The most logical method for preaching through the Epistle of James is to do it paragraph by paragraph. Thus, the expositor should develop a paragraph outline of the Book of James, comparable to the one suggested below:

Paragraph Number	Scripture Reference	Summary Statement
1	1:1	Salutation
2	1:2-8	The trials/tribulations of the believer
3	1:9-11	The proper attitude toward material things
4	1:12-18	The temptations of the believer
5	1:19-25	Contrast between the hearer and the doer
6	1:26-27	Contrast between empty religion and genuine religion
7	2:1-13	The sin of partiality
8	2:14-26	The relationship of faith and works
9	3:1-11	Controlling the tongue
10	3:13-18	Contrast between false and true wisdom

11	4:1-10	Warning against worldliness
12	4:11-12	Warning against censoriousness
13	4:13-17	Warning against presumption
14	5:1-6	Coming judgment against the oppressive rich
15	5: 7-11	Patience/endurance amidst affliction
16	5:12	Truthfulness in speech
17	5:13-18	Praying for the sick
18	5:19-20	Restoring the erring brother

II. *Specific Preparation*

Once the foundation of general preparation has been laid, we must then turn our attention to the week-by-week exegesis of each paragraph and the development of the sermon therefrom.

Step One: Exegete Each Individual Paragraph

1. Study the passage in English. Meditate on it; brood over it; pray over it; ask God to help you see what is there.
2. Make observations. Note the key words; write down every spiritual truth observed.
3. If possible, work through the paragraph in the Greek New Testament. If not, utilize study helps available for those without a working knowledge of Greek.
4. Consult exegetical commentaries. This should be reserved to last in order to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the truths of Scripture personally.

Step Two: Formulate the Exegetical Idea

- I. The prayerful and diligent exegesis of a paragraph will enable the expositor to determine the author's main intent and purpose in the passage.
2. Writing out the exegetical idea as clearly and concisely as possible helps to clarify the sermon topic.

Step Three: Develop the Sermon Outline

- I. Pinpoint the spiritual principles and concepts used by the author to develop and support his major thesis. These will usually become the major and/or subpoints of the message.
2. Utilize homiletical commentaries for assistance in developing the sermon outline.
3. Normally the sermon should have between two and five major points.

4. Alliteration is helpful to the memory, but accuracy should never be sacrificed for it.

Step Four: Build the Sermon (Three Essential Ingredients)

1. *Exegesis*

- a. Exegesis of the Word of God should be the core of every sermon.
- b. Every major point should be drawn from the text.

2. *Application*

- a. Spiritual truths/principles must be conscientiously applied to the needs of the people.
- b. Learn to apply each spiritual truth to specific needs within the congregation.

3. *Illustration*

- a. Illustrate the sermon with vivid, cogent experiences to which the people can easily relate.
- b. As a general rule, each major point of the sermon should be illustrated.
- c. In addition, illustrations are effective in both the introduction and conclusion.

Step Five: Write Out the Sermon

1. *Introduction*

- a. It is probably best to write out the introduction in paragraph form.
- b. This practice gives us poise as we begin the sermon.

2. *Body of the Sermon*

- a. The body of the sermon is more easily remembered if it is written out in outline form.
- b. The outline should not be too highly structured; remember that the sermon is to be heard, not read.

3. *Conclusion/ Invitation*

- a. Like the introduction, the conclusion/invitation should be written in paragraph form.
- b. Careful attention should be given to the theological content of the invitation.

After we have prepared in this way, we are now ready to deliver the sermon. After we have prayed and meditated over the exegetical outline, we are ready to preach the sermon with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. We hope the following outlines can be beneficial to the readers as they prepare to preach through the Book of James.

III. *Suggested Homiletical Outlines*

Why James?

James 1:1

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Reasons Why the Book of James is Important

I. *THE BOOK OF JAMES IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF*

WHO WROTE IT--"James, the (half) brother of Jesus."

A. A Servant of God

B. A Servant of God's People.

II. *THE BOOK OF JAMES IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF ITS RECIPIENTS.*

A. Historically: "the Twelve Tribes"

B. Prophetically: All Believers

III. *THE BOOK OF JAMES IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS ABOUT* - "the testing of one's faith."

Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen

James 1:2-8 (cf. I Peter 1:6-9)

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Trials/Tribulations in the Life of the Believer

I. *THE CERTAINTY OF TRIALS/TRIBULATIONS*--"when." v.2

II. *THE VARIETY OF TRIALS/TRIBULATIONS*--"divers." v. 2

III. *THE INTENSITY OF TRIALS/TRIBULATIONS*--"trying." v.3

IV. *THE MAIN TARGET OF TRIALS/TRIBULATIONS*--"your Faith." v. 3

V. *THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS/TRIBULATIONS*--"Patience (Endurance)." v. 3

VI. *THE PROPER RESPONSE TO TRIALS/TEMPTATIONS*--"Joy." v. 2

Does Money Make the Man?

James 1:9-11

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Proper Attitude Toward Material Things

I. *THE ATTITUDE OF THE LOWLY BROTHER.* v. 9

A. The Command: Rejoice. v. 9a

B. The Result: Exaltation. v. 9b

II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE RICH BROTHER. vv.10-11

A. The Reason. v. 10

B. The Illustration. v. 11

How Do You Handle Temptation?

James 1:12-18

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Temptations in the Life of the Believer

I. THE CERTAINTY OF TEMPTATIONS. vv.12, 13, 14

II. THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATIONS. vv. 13, 14

A. Negatively. v. 13

B. Positively. v. 14

III. THE PATTERN OF TEMPTATION. vv. 14, 15 (cf. Joshua 7:21)

A. Desire--"lust." v. 14

B. Deception--"enticed." v. 14

C. Disobedience-"sin." v. 15

D. Death-v. 15

IV. THE RESULT OF ENDURING TEMPTATION. v.12

A. Blessedness. v. 12a

B. Crown of Life. v. 12b

Passing The Hearing Test

James 1:19-25

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Contrast between the Hearer and the Doer1. THE WRONG RESPONSE TO THE WORD--"hearer only."
vv.22-24

A. Characteristic of the Hearer--"self-deceived." v. 22

B. Illustration of the Hearer. vv. 23, 24

II. THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO THE WORD--"doer." vv. 22,
25

A. The Mandate for Obedience. v. 22

B. The Reward for Obedience. v. 25

How To Tell When You Have The Real Thing

James 1:26-27

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Contrast Between Empty Religion and Genuine Religion

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPTY RELIGION. v. 26

A. Lack of Self-control--"bridleth not his tongue." v. 26

B. Self-deception--"deceiveth his own heart." v. 26b

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF GENUINE RELIGION. v. 27

- A. Concern for the Helpless--"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." v. 27a
- B. Holy Life-style--"to keep himself unspotted from the world." v. 27b

The Peril of Prejudice

James 2:1-13

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Sin of Partiality

- I. THE REBUKE FOR PARTIALITY. vv.I-4
 - A. The Prohibition of Partiality. v. 1
 - B. An Illustration of Partiality. vv. 2-3
 - C. The Self-condemnation of Partiality. v. 4
- II. THE RESULTS OF PARTIALITY. vv. 5-11
 - A. Inconsistent with the Purposes of God. vv. 5-11
 - B. A Breach of the "Royal Law." vv. 8-11
- III. THE REMEDY FOR PARTIALITY. vv. 12-13
 - A. Be Obedient to the Scriptures, Not Mores. v. 12
 - B. Be Merciful. v. 13

The Great Divorce

James 2:14-26

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Relationship of Faith And Works

- I. CHARACTERISTICS OF GENUINE FAITH. vv. 15-20
 - A. Genuine Faith produces service to others. vv. 15, 16.
 - B. Genuine Faith is Visible to Others. v. 18
 - C. Genuine Faith is More Than Intellectual. vv. 19,20
- II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF GENUINE FAITH. vv. 21-25
 - A. Abraham (Jewish Patriarch). vv. 21-24
 - B. Rahab (Gentile Harlot), v. 25
- III. THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH-"Works." vv. 14, 17, 26

The Big Little Troublemaker

James 3:1-12

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Biblical Mandate for Controlling the Tongue

- I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTROLLING THE TONGUE. vv.I-2
 - A. The Teacher. v. 1
 - B. The Perfect Man. v. 2

- II. THE NEED FOR CONTROLLING THE TONGUE. vv. 3-5
 - A. The Analogy of The Horse's Bridle. v. 3
 - B. The Analogy of The Ship's Rudder. v. 4
 - C. The Analogy of the Fire's Spark. v. 5
- III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN UNCONTROLLED TONGUE. vv. 6-8
 - A. The Tongue is a Fire. v. 6
 - B. The Tongue is an Untamed Beast. v. 7
 - C. The Tongue is a Deadly Poison. v. 8
- IV. THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE TONGUE. vv. 9-12
 - A. Evidence of the Inconsistency. vv. 9-10a
 - B. Rebuke for the Inconsistency. vv. 10b-12

The Wise And Otherwise.

James 3:13-18

EXEGETICAL IDEA: The Contrast Between True Wisdom and False Wisdom

- I. FALSE WISDOM. vv.14-16
 - A. Motivations for False Wisdom. v. 14
 - 1. Bitter jealousy
 - 2. Selfish ambition
 - B. Characteristics of False Wisdom. vv. 14-15
 - 1. Arrogant
 - 2. Self -deceptive
 - 3. Earthly
 - 4. Natural
 - 5. Demonic
 - C. The Outcome of False Wisdom. v. 16
 - 1. Disorder
 - 2. Every evil thing
- II. TRUE WISDOM. vv.17-18
 - A. Characteristics of True Wisdom. v. 17
 - 1. Pure
 - 2. Peaceable
 - 3. Gentle
 - 4. Reasonable
 - 5. Full of Mercy/Good Fruits
 - 6. Unwavering
 - 7. Without Hypocrisy
 - B. The Fruit of True Wisdom: Peace. v. 18

The Peril of Worldliness

James 4:1-10

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Warning Against Worldliness

I. THE SOURCE OF WORLDLINESS. vv. 1-4

A. Self-gratification. vv. 1-3

B. The "World System." v. 4

II. THE SOLUTION FOR WORLDLINESS. vv. 5-10

A. Submit to God. vv. 5-7a

B. Resist the Devil. v. 7b

C. Draw Near to God. vv. 8,-10

1. Personal cleansing. v. 8

2. Public repentance. v. 9

3. Private humility. v. 10

The Sin of Slander

James 4:11-12

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Warning Against Censoriousness

I. THE PROHIBITION OF CENSORIOUSNESS. v. 11a

A. "Speaking Against" a Brother Prohibited. v. 11a

B. "Judging" a Brother Prohibited. v. 11a

II. THE REASONS FOR THE PROHIBITION. vv. 11b-12

A. To Condemn Others is to Play God. vv. 11b-12a

B. To Condemn Others is to Compare Erroneously. v. 12b

Is It Wrong To Plan Ahead?

James 4:13-17

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Warning To Believers Against Presumption

I. THE WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE. vv. 13, 14, 16

A. Presumption Rebuked. vv. 13-14

1. Because of the complexity of life. v. 13

2. Because of the uncertainty of life. v. 14a

3. Because of the brevity of life. v. 14b

B. The Arrogant Nature of Presumption. v. 1

II. THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE. vv. 15, 17

A. Recognition of the Providence of God. v. 15

B. Exhortation to Make Plans With Complete Reliance Upon the Will of God. v. 17

When Is Wealth Worldly?

James 5:1-6

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Coming Judgment Against the Oppressive Rich

- I. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE JUDGMENT. v.1
- II. THE DEPICTION OF THE JUDGMENT. vv. 2-3
- III. THE REASONS FOR THE JUDGMENT. vv. 4-6
 - A. Withholding of Wages. v. 4
 - B. Self-indulgent life-style. v. 5
 - C. Oppression of the righteous. v. 6

The Power of Patience

James 5:7-11

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Patience/Endurance Amidst Afflictions

- I. THE EXHORTATION TO PATIENCE/ENDURANCE. vv. 7-8
- II. THE MOTIVATION FOR PATIENCE/ENDURANCE--"the coming of the Lord." vv. 7-8
- III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF PATIENCE/ENDURANCE. vv. 7, 10-11
 - A. The Farmer. v. 7
 - B. The Prophets. v. 10
 - C. Job. v. 11
- IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENCE/ENDURANCE. vv. 8-9
 - A. Avoid Discouragement--"strengthen your hearts." v. 8
 - B. Avoid Complaining. v. 9

The High Cost of Cheap Talk

James 5:12

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Truthfulness in Speech

- I. THE NEGATIVE PROHIBITION. v. 12a
- II. THE POSITIVE EXHORTATION. v.12b

Can Prayer Heal The Sick?

James 5:13-18

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Praying For The Sick

- I. THE NEED FOR PRAYER. vv. 13, 14
 - A. When Suffering Affliction. v. 13
 - B. When Sick. v. 14

- II. THE PROCEDURE FOR PRAYER. v.14
 - A. Summon the Spiritual Leaders of the Church. v. 14a
 - 1. Anoint the sick person with oil.
 - 2. Pray for the sick person.
 - B. Leave the Results To God--"in the name of the Lord" means "according to the will of God." v. 14b
- III. THE POWER OF PRAYER. vv. 15, 16
 - A. When It Is Done in Faith. v. 15
 - B. When Sin is Confessed. v. 16a
 - C. When a Man Is Right With God. v. 16b
- IV. AN ILLUSTRATION OF PRAYER (cf. 1 Kings 17-18). vv. 17-18

Operation Restoration

James 5:19-20

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Restoring the Erring Brother

- I. THE NEED FOR RESTORATION--"any of you do err from the truth." v. 19a
- II. THE INSTRUMENT OF RESTORATION--"and one (i.e., one of the brethren) convert him." v. 19b
- III. THE RESULTS OF RESTORATION. v. 20
 - A. The Straying One's Soul Will Be Saved from Death. v. 20a
 - B. A Multitude of Sins Will Be Covered. v. 20b

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The Criswell College
4010 Gaston Ave.
Dallas, TX 75246
www.criswell.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu

