"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"
Part 1: Introduction to the Book of James
BIG IDEA: True Saving Faith is Living Faith – It has boots on!

INTRO: Bible addresses two themes – the *way* to God and the *walk* with God. To the *unsaved sinner* it says here's the *way* to God. To the *saved saint*, it says here's the *walk* to God. To the saved saint, James says here's how to walk with God. He doesn't address the essence of salvation at all. Nothing is said about the cross, resurrection, Holy Spirit, salvation, etc. – all just assumed. Though James doesn't speak to the how of salvation, he plainly speaks what it produces.

James presents a case for living faith and practical Christianity. It is not so much about creed or doctrine as about one's conduct or duty. James lays it on the line concerning some of the practical skills every Christian needs to develop to live for Christ, esp. in a society that increasingly despises the Christian faith. He pleas for godly behavior in daily living. To introduce this unique letter, let me ask and answer some questions:

I. AUTHORSHIP (Who humanly wrote it? v. 1)

A. BEST CANDIDATE is James, the brother of our Lord. After Jesus, Mary and Joseph had other children (Mk. 6:3; Jude 1). James is oldest since mentioned first. Paul says he is the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19). Early on thought Jesus was a little crazy and an embarrassment (Mk. 3:20-21, 31-35; Jn. 7:2-5). Maybe jealous and intimidated? According to 1 Cor. 15:7, he saw his resurrected brother. Probably, became a believer then. Next he is in Upper Room with disciples and others (Acts 1:14). He soon emerges as a leader in early church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:1ff – presiding elder; 21:17-18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12). He appears to have been married (1 Cor. 9:5).

B. "What kind of man was he?"

1. A *deeply spiritual man* who came to faith as an adult called James the Righteous (Just). He was a holy man of prayer (camel knees). A man deeply devoted to righteousness.
2. Man of *strong character and conviction*. His writing is forceful and direct. In 108 verses, there are 54 imperatives. He's very black and white. He's not too concerned about what people think. Yet, he cared for the poor, needy, and unknown. Tradition says he was martyred in AD 62 by being tossed over Temple wall!
3. Had *great knowledge* – Though intensely practical, he was a brilliant man. He knew the OT well (50). He had mastered his brother's Sermon on the Mount (15). He deals beautifully with doctrines of temptation, sin, faith, suffering, and prayer.
4. Deep *love for nature* – Over 30 references to nature, fits one who spent much time in the outdoors he loved (1:6; 3:7; etc.).
5. Saw himself as a *humble slave* (1:1). He doesn't call himself an Apostle, Pastor of 1st Church, brother of Jesus – just a slave. He calls Jesus "Lord" 11 times. He saw he had two masters – God & Christ.

II. RECIPIENTS (To Whom? 1:1) – James writes *to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations*. Intense persecutions from Romans and Jews caused those Jewish Jerusalem believers to be scattered abroad. All were struggling from loss of possessions, all were suffering for their newfound faith in the Messiah – some were even defecting. James writes to suffering Jewish believers. Since not written to a specific church, included as one of eight General Epistles.

III. DATE (When written?) - No mention of Jerusalem's destruction (70 A.D.) and no mention of Acts 15 Jerusalem Council (49 A.D.). He writes to scattered and persecuted Jews. Acts 7:57-8:3 (35-37 A.D.) and Acts 12:1-5 (42-44 A.D.). Probably best dated 45-48 A.D., giving time for James to emerge as church leader. This date makes James the earliest NT book, giving us some of the earliest of Christian teachings.

IV. PURPOSES or THEME (Why written?) – To *encourage* them to maturely live out their newfound faith, no matter the difficulties. True saving faith must be lived out – has boots on 1:22; 2:14. He writes to instruct them on skills needed to put boots on their faith. A quick overview of 13 skills. Living faith - Faith with boots on:

1. (1:2-12) Handles Life's Troubles / Trials
2. (1:13-18) Resists Sinful Temptations
3. (1:19-27) Rightly Responds to God'sWord
4. (2:1-13) Practices Impartiality
5. (2:14-26) Fleshes out the Faith
6. (3:1-12) Tames the Tongue
7. (3:13-18) Cultivates True Wisdom
8. (4:1-10) Shuns Worldliness
9. (4:11-17) Avoids Playing God / Does God's Will
10. (5:1-6) Manages Money Honestly and Wisely
11. (5:7-12) Endures Suffering Patiently
12. (5:13-18) Prays Continuously (God-consciousness)
13. (5:19-20) Restores the Fallen Gently

Important practical teachings on Christian living in difficult times. These are skills every believer must practice to mature in the faith (1:4).This is faith with boots on! James writes to Christians to "buck them up, bawl them out, remind them of both their privileges and responsibilities, and, in general, jolt them out of their doldrums and into reality."

CONC. – *True saving faith is living faith*. It has boots on. So essential is this, that the first NT book written deals with it. It provided that early church and those early struggling believers a manual for mature Christian living, esp. in hard times.