

JAMES' LETTER

(Paparoa Christian Missions + Ararua Church - May 24-26 1996 - EKB)

Author: James a brother of Jesus, Leader of the church in Jerusalem.
Gal 1:19, Gal 2:12, Ac 15:13, Ac 21:18, Ac 12:17.

Date: 45AD.

Theme: Practical Christian living. The need for outwardly changed lives.

Chapter 1:

v1 Author and those written to.

v2-4 Enlargement under pressure. Increase that comes in times of adversity, *Ps 4:1*. We learn to endure, and we mature through trials when we respond in faith, (KJV), *Ps 84:4-7, Ps 118:5*. Spiritual growth occurs when we keep holding on to God in faith through our trials.

v5-8 Genuine faith is required to receive God's provision. Full salvation has been provided for us through Christ but faith is required for us to receive it, *Lk 11:9-13, Mk 11:22-24, Phil 4:6,7, Jn 16:23,24*. Wisdom from God is freely available through Christ, but we must ask in faith believing that when we ask for it, we receive it. God's promises never fail, *2Pet 1:3,4*.

v9-11 Keep material riches in their right priority. Rich or poor, every believer is great in the Lord's sight. Material wealth does not buy us favour with God, but we can faithfully use it to extend God's Kingdom. True riches are our deposit in the bank of heaven. *Mat 6:19,20, Ps 62:10, Deut 8:18, Mal 3:8-12, 1Tim 6:6-10*.

v12-16 Fight the battle against temptation and make sure you win, *Mat 26:41, Lk 11:4, 1Cor 10:13*. The "way of escape" is not to avoid the temptation, but is the power of faith in God's Word, and the strength of the Holy Spirit, which comes through prayer, so that we can victoriously endure through the temptation, *Heb4:15*. We are all tempted frequently, but temptation is not sin. When we are tempted we do not have to sin but if we do, the Lord is faithful to His promise in *1Jn 1:9,7*.

v17-18 God, the Giver of every good gift has given to us new lives by His Word of truth, *1Pet 1:23*.

v19-20 Listen twice as much as you speak and get rid of anger, *Rom 6:12, Eph 4:22-31*. Anger is a problem to some but its power to rule our lives is broken as we believe and confess, *Rom 6:6,11*, constantly.

v21 Refuse all sin and receive God's full salvation by continuing daily to fill your life with God's Word, *Jn 8:31-36*. God's Word is living and powerful, *Heb 4:12*, and sets us free as we receive it by faith each day.

- v22-25 Act on the Word and obey it, don't just listen to it. Be a wise person and build the house of your life upon the Rock, *Mat 7:24-27*. Hear and do. To hear and not do equals deception. The perfect law of liberty is the law of Christ, *Mat 5,6,7*, "The Sermon on the Mount," or the "royal law" of *Jam 2:8, Gal 5:14, Rom 13:8-10*. Obedience to Christ is the only true freedom that exists. It is the freedom to be what you were created to be. Only God has the freedom to be self determining. As created beings, our freedom is only found in living in obedience to God's Word. The only way we can have freedom to drive a car on the road is because all the drivers are obeying the law of the Road Code.
- v26-27 Refuse to allow your tongue to speak harsh words. Care for the orphans and widows and don't let the world mess you up.

Chapter 2:

- v1-9 Avoid showing favouritism to the rich and belittling and despising the poor. This is disobedience to God's Royal Law, (2:8), and is of course sin. Consider motives for favouring the rich, *Jude 16*. Avoid cliques. Receive and bless all whom the Lord has received, *Lk 14:13, Lk 4:18, Pro 19:17, Pro 28:21*. It is not wrong to have special friends.
- v10-11 God's standard is absolute, not a % pass mark. God does not wink at the sins we ignore. We have all fallen far short of God's standard but through faith in Christ we are forgiven and declared righteous in God's sight, *Gal 2:16*.
- v12-13 Make sure of keeping the "Royal Law," (2:8), for by it we will be judged. Be full of mercy to others, especially to the poor and unlovely, *2Cor 5:10, Rom 14:10-12*. The first fruit of love is mercy.
- v14-26 Faith works by love, *Gal 5:6*, and love does good things to others, *Gal 5:13*, with a serving heart. True, we are saved by faith not works, *Eph 2:8,9*, but saving faith always results in works of love to others. Faith and works cannot be separated. (Three times: v17,20,26). We are not saved by good works but for good works, *Mat 25:31-46*. Faith is knowing God's Word, believing God's Word and obeying God's Word.

Chapter 3:

- v1-2 Don't be too eager to teach others, because you are giving the appearance of having "arrived," but in reality you are as fallible as any other. After "teaching" others comes testing.
- v3-12 The words we speak have great power for good or for evil. The words we speak come from the heart, *Mat 15:18-20*, and express what we are thinking. If our thoughts are pure and godly our words will bless others. Without God's help no-one can purify his/her heart, *Ac 15:9, Ezk 36:25-27*. By believing God's promises to give us a pure heart, our thoughts and our words also, will be pure, and bring blessing to others, *Heb 8:10, 1Jn 1:9, Deut 30:6*.

- v13-16 Establish purity in your thought life, *Rom 12:2, Col 3:2, Phil 4:8*, and consistency of godly living will result. Where there is bitterness, jealousy and selfishness, all manner of evil will abound. Bitterness comes from lack of mercy and forgiveness to others, jealousy comes from lack of thankfulness for what God has already given us, and selfishness comes from lack of choosing to be a servant to others.
- v17-18 The wisdom from heaven bears seven fruits, or pillars, *Pro 9:1*, and is Christ's character. Wisdom is knowing and doing what Jesus has told us to do, *Mat 7:24-26*. These seven fruits flow from hearing and doing what Jesus commands.

Chapter 4:

- v1-3 Why is there so much infighting in the church?
Answer: Evil desires in the hearts of the believers, who are seeking after pleasure.
- v4-6 Seeking after the pleasures of this world is idolatry or "spiritual harlotry," and that is to be an enemy of God. The Holy Spirit within us is tenderly jealous for our affection and gives us grace to love God. If we humble ourselves, He will help us, otherwise He resists us.
- v7-10 So humbly give yourself to God and resist the devil. Completely yield to the Lord as His disciple and He will transform you. Weep before Him and He will hear your cry.
- v11-12 Refuse to judge and condemn one another. If we do we are acting in pride and rubbishing God's "Royal Law," *Jam 2:8, Mat 7:1*.
- v13-16 Depend on God and seek His guidance for your ongoing vision and plans. It is only His grace that makes life possible, *Pro 3:5,6*.
- v17 Be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Sin is failing to do the good we know we should.

Chapter 5:

- v1-6 Repent, you rich who have withheld the wages of your employees and heaped up the loot for yourselves. The Judge is at the door.
- v7-11 You who are waiting for the Lord's return, be patient, like the farmer waiting for his crop to ripen. He is coming on time. Don't grumble about one another but bless and encourage each other. Refuse to criticise. The Lord is our Judge. Think about the prophets and Job, who went through tough times with patient endurance and in the end received the Lord's reward.
- v12 Don't swear at all, just say, "Yes!" or "No!" as the case may be, *Mat 5:33-37*.
- v13 In suffering, keep praying, and when something happens to make you rejoice, praise Him.

- v14-15* If you are sick call the elders, after you have prayed much, and before calling the doctor. The anointing with oil, and the prayer of faith, will save the sick, and the Lord will heal him, and forgive his sins.
- v16-18* Confess your faults to one another and then pray for each other that God will make you whole. Prayer is your most powerful weapon. Elijah is a good example of power in prayer.
- v19-20* Be committed and active in seeking ways to witness to unsaved people. They may be backsliders as mentioned here, or those who have never been with the Lord.