

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

Introduction

One of the largest sections in any bookstore or library today is the "*self-help*" section. In this area of books, you will find titles like "*Think And Grow Rich*" (Napoleon Hill) and "*How To Win Friends And Influence People*" (Dale Carnegie), and then the ones for people like myself—the various "*Dummies Guides*" to whatever!

Now there are even a plethora of YouTube Videos on how to do almost anything! The thought is that knowledge is power and empowerment leads to success.

Well tonight we begin a journey through what might be THE "*How-to*" book in God's word—***The General Epistle Of James***. Some have said that this book tells us "*how to do life*", if we will only take heed to it! This is not a long book, in fact there are only **five chapters** consisting of **108 verses** that we will look at. However they we will find that these verses contain **over 50 imperatives** about everyday living and life.

We'll discover what this book has to say has to say about trials, temptation, works and faith, our tongue, praying, and much more.

Martin Luther didn't like this epistle of James because he saw it as a contradiction to the letter to Rome. However, when we get to Chapter 2, we will see that it is not a contradiction to, but rather it is a complement to Paul's message.

James will hit us where we live (that is exactly where we need to be touched). If we allow ourselves to be affected by this book, we will become better—better men and women, children and parents, workers and bosses, as well as believers and Church members. That is the power that we will find here in this inspired Epistle that is a part of the Word of God for us!

So tonight I want us to consider verse 1 of Chapter 1 as we introduce this book to you this evening. (Read the Verse)

Some might be tempted to overlook such a verse and move on, but we won't!

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

Some might think that this verse lacks anything substantial, but I want you to stick with me tonight here as we begin so that we can see something about the one who the LORD used to write this spiritual teaching and the circumstances under which it was originally written.

The last word of this verse gives us the attitude of the writer. "*Greeting*" in the original language is the word from which we get our word "*grace*" from. It is a happy, glad, and cheerful greeting. We might think of it as "*Grace to you!*"

I. WE SEE THE SERVANT THAT WAS SOLD OUT!

He begins by identifying himself as "**James.**" While there are at least 4 individuals in the New Testament named "*James*", the evidence is that **this** "*James*" was indeed the half-brother of our Lord.

Let's consider this for a minute.

A. Consider That James Was One Of The Lord's Half-Brothers And Sisters Who Are Spoken Of In Scriptures.

He is spoken of by name as being among the brothers and sisters of Christ:

Matthew 13:55-56 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

(There is also a parallel passage in *Mark 6:3* mentioning James and there are other passages mentioning both the brothers and sisters of Jesus in general)

[Cf. Matthew 12:46-50; John 2:12; 7:3, 10]

So, James was a natural born son of Joseph and Mary after their marriage, so that would make him our Lord's half-brother as they shared a common mother.

B. Consider That James Was Not A Believer During Our Lord's Life.

Along with the other children of Joseph and Mary, James did not readily accept the Messiah-ship of Jesus.

John 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

James grew up in the same home as Jesus, he followed in His shadow in those formative years, but **he did not come to faith until AFTER the resurrection!**

No doubt James **endured the talk, the innuendo, and the general attitude** of having a family member who proclaimed that he was the very Son of God.

That had to be tough as well as having an older brother Who was absolutely sinless!

C. Consider That James Was A Witness Of Christ's Resurrection!

Paul mentions him in his list of witnesses in:

1 Corinthians 15:5-7 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

It would seem as if James was won to faith by a special manifestation of the risen Lord. The result of that glorious sight of the risen Lord transformed James into a disciple and a believer! And with that, an example of unparallel influence was born.

It is after this experience that we find "*the brethren of the Lord*" joined with "*the apostles*" and "*the women*" assembled together in the upper room.

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

D. Consider That James Became A Leader Of The Church At Jerusalem. (Acts 12:17; 15:4-34; 21:18, 19; Gal. 2:1-10)

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

Galatians 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. (James the apostle was martyred in Acts 12 and what Paul describes in this verse happened in Acts 13)

E. Consider That James Styled Himself Here Not As The Brother Of Christ, But Only As The Servant Or Bondslave Of God And Of The Lord Jesus Christ.

The word translated as servant here means "*one who gives himself up wholly to another's will.*"

(See Deuteronomy 15:12-17)

When James finally committed to Christ, he sold himself lock, stock, and barrel to the risen Lord.

What or Who are you sold out to? We are all sold out to something or someone. We can be sold out to making money, to our hobbies, to our favorite sport, and many other things.

Never forget, people who know you know what you are sold out to. Ask yourself the question, "*What is it that drives my life, schedule, money, and desires?*"

F. Consider That James Was A Man Who Believed In The Power Of Prayer.

We will see that this is evidenced by the space he devotes to prayer in his epistle.

Because of his habit of always kneeling in intercession for the saints, his knees became calloused like a camel's; thus he became known as "*The Man with Camel's Knees.*"

History says that he was cruelly martyred by the Scribes and Pharisees, who cast him from the pinnacle of the Temple.

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

Since the fall did not kill him, they then stoned him, finally dispatching him with a fuller's club.

WE SEE THIS SERVANT THAT WAS SOLD OUT...

II. WE SEE THE SAINTS THAT WERE SCATTERED!

Our text says, "...to the twelve which are scattered abroad..."

The original readers of this epistle were believing Jews who had been displaced because of the persecution of the first century believers.

This makes sense that James would be writing to them when you consider that James was previously a Pastor to these folks before them being dispersed by persecution!

This group of Jews was considered to be "*Completed Jews*" or more clearly, "*Converted Jews*." After the stoning of Stephen, persecution increased and these were scattered throughout the Roman world for fear of their lives.

Now understand that the broader application of this book is for **ALL** those who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus!

Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

We who are believers, like these addressed in this letter, are considered saints. A saint is one who has been forgiven and cleansed from sin. We are not sinless, but we should sin less. We may slip and fall into sin, but we are not living in a lifestyle of sin.

As saints, **we are not faultless people, but we are forgiven people!**
We are not bound people, but rather we are blessed people! We
are not perfect people, but thank God we are a pardoned people!
We are all these things in Christ Jesus!

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

Our slipping and failing into sin doesn't diminish our position as saints, in fact, one of the 'telling truths' of our lives is how we handle the slips and falls.

Proverbs 24:16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

Psalms 37:23-24 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

When we slip and fall, Christ is there to pick us up, dust us off, and lead us on. Generally speaking, rightly handled troubles and trials will make us stronger.

Now consider those words, "*scattered abroad*." As I've already said the first readers were saved Jews from the twelve tribes. When Stephen was stoned and Saul was persecuting the Church, they were running for their lives! (***Acts 8:1-4***)

Wherever they went, they told people about Jesus, began evangelizing people in the places to where they fled, and started churches all across the region.

It took the stoning of Stephen to motivate the believers to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus '*to go into all the world.*' Until the trials of persecution came, they were content to stay at home. Yet, they (like us) are called to scatter into this world and make a difference with the Gospel!

We gather together as Christ's church to worship, learn doctrine, pray, and fellowship. All these are good and needed for our spiritual development. When we drive off the grounds here, we enter our mission field. As we move outside the confines of the Church we are to go as Christ's representative! But are we doing that?

BOOK OF JAMES
LEARNING FROM JAMES
JAMES 1:1

WE SEE THIS SERVANT THAT WAS SOLD OUT...
WE SEE THE SAINTS THAT WERE SCATTERED...

III. WE SEE THE SAVIOUR THAT IS SEEKING!

When we look at this one verse, "*the Lord Jesus Christ*" falls almost dead-center of the verse. Do you see that?

It begins with the Servant and ends with the Saints and it's all drawn together by the Saviour.

In Luke 19:10, Jesus said that he came, "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

In John 10:10, He said "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*"

Conclusion

Jesus is still seeking today! He's seeking to take your life and absolutely and totally transform it and make it better than it has ever been!

He wants you to get the absolute best from your life! The question is do YOU want that? It's available for those who want it!