

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!**  
**JAMES CH1:19-26**

**INTRODUCTION**

How many verses are there in the Book of James? 108! With **55 of them being direct, not watered down, clear “imperatives or commands”**, James had plenty of instructions to pass on to his generation of born again Christians, which are still applicable now!

1. Ch1:2 – Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds ...
2. v4 – Let steadfastness have its full effect ...
3. v5 – Let him ask God who gives generously ...
4. v6 – Let him ask in faith, with no doubting ...
5. v7 – That person must not suppose that he will receive anything ...
6. v9 – Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation ...
7. v13 – Let no-one say when he is tempted ...
8. v16 – Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers ... **12 in Ch1**
9. v19 – Know this, my beloved brothers let ...
- 10.v21 – Put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness ...
- 11.v10 – Receive with meekness the implanted word ...
- 12.v22 – Be doers of the word and not hearers only ...
13. Ch2:1 – Show no partiality as you hold the faith ...
- 14.v5 – Listen my beloved brothers, has not God ...
- 15.v12 – Speak and so ... **5 in Ch2**
- 16.v12 – Act as those who are to be judged ...
- 17.v18 – Show me your faith apart from your works ...
18. Ch3:1 – Not many of you should become teachers ...
- 19.v4 Look at the ships also: although they are so large ...
- 20.v13 – Let him show his works in the meekness ... **5 in Ch3**
- 21.v14 – Do not boast ...
- 22.v14 – Do not be false to the truth ...
23. Ch4:7 – Submit yourselves therefore to God ...
- 24.v7 – Resist the devil and he will flee ...
- 25.v8 – Draw near to God and he will draw near to you ...
- 26.v8 – Cleanse your hands ...
- 27.v8 – Purify your hearts ...
- 28.v9 – Mourn ...
- 29.v9 – Weep ... **12 in Ch4**
- 30.v9 – Let your laughter ...
- 31.v9 – Let your joy ...
- 32.v10 – Humble yourselves before the Lord ...
- 33.v11 – Do not speak evil against one another ...
- 34.v13 – Come now you who say ...
35. Ch5:1 – Come now, you rich ...
- 36.v1 – Weep ...
- 37.v1 – Howl ...
- 38.v4 – Behold the wages of the labourers ...
- 39.v7 – Be patient therefore brothers, before the coming of the Lord ...
- 40.v7 – See how the farmer waits ...
- 41.v8 – Be patient ...
- 42.v8 – Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord ...
- 43.v9 – Do not grumble against one another ...
- 44.v9 – Behold the judge is standing ...

- 45.v10 – Take the prophets ...
- 46.v11 – Behold we consider those blessed ...
- 47.v12 – Do not swear ...
- 48.v12 – Let your “yes” be yes ...
- 49.v13 – Let him pray ...
- 50.v13 – Let him sing praise ...
- 51.v14 – Let him call for the elders ...
- 52.v14 – Let them pray ...
- 53.v16 – Confess your sins ...
- 54.v16 – Pray for one another ...
- 55.v20 – Let him know ...

## 21 in Ch5

“For these reasons, James has been called **“the proverbs of the New Testament”** (Proverbs being – a brief saying that conveys a lesson about how to live wisely and well, usually drawn from observations about nature and life. The Book of Proverbs contains the vast majority of biblical proverbs, but they occur in other Books of the Bible as well).

**James is therefore highly relevant to the Christian life.** Unlike many of the other Books of the New Testament, James's aim is not to give a theological presentation of the gospel. Rather, **he writes his book to those who already believe the gospel, and his goal is to help them live faithfully as followers of Jesus.** There are many different and seemingly disconnected themes in James – perseverance under trial, riches and poverty, wisdom, the danger of the tongue, prayer, and faith and works. But what ties them all together is James's desire to take the teaching of Jesus and apply it to the Christians personal life” (Cited in James by Greg Gilbert, pg 7+8).

### **HEAR THE WORD! V19-20**

It is important for us as a Church to remember that James is writing to a “dispersed people” scattered because of being persecuted as Christians! As a Pastor who would have known many of them, he is concerned for their welfare and has been writing to them about trials, not focusing on the wrong done to them, but focusing on, that they don't wrong themselves or wrong one another, in the midst of their trials!

***These verses should still be understood under the umbrella of trials.***

James is a skilful Pastor and purposely uses a kind and warm term throughout his letter, when addressing his congregation, especially when having to set out clear commands. The term that he uses over and over again is filled with warmth, care and intent, revealing the vital relationship between preacher and congregation - **“adelphoi mou” - my brothers and sisters, or the variant “adelphoi mou agapetoi - my beloved brothers and sisters,** which comes through the lips straight from the heart (Ch1:2, 16, 19; Ch2:1, 5, 14; Ch3:1; Ch5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19 = 12 times in total).

V19 – Here, James introduces imperative number 9 - **“Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”**, but in relation to what situation? For us to work this out, look at v18 - Word of truth, v21 - Implanted Word, v22 - Doers of the Word, v23 - Hearer of the Word, v25 - Perfect Law and Law of Liberty! It is in relation to hearing God's Word, especially in the midst of trials and temptations, that we need to be **quick to hear from God, slow to speak, slow to anger,** as trials and temptations can cause us to speak and become angry, quickly! And man nor woman's anger produces the righteousness of God!

Ch3:1-12, sheds perhaps more light on this imperative, when James states “Not many of

you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness”, implying that there were those within the assembly (Ch2:2), who whilst being taught God's Word, would not listen well, and speak out too quickly!

V20 – The Righteousness of God - Dikaiosune, or righteousness, means **living in a right relationship with God, with people and with all creation**. We act with righteousness when we live justly, honestly, and faithfully according to God's revealed Word!

### **RECEIVE THE WORD! V21**

Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus? Jesus said of the religious leaders who were trying to kill him: “You seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you” (John 8:37). The Word of truth (v18) was not implanted in them. These leaders knew their Bibles better than anyone, but the Word of God “found no place in them.” It was not implanted in them.

V21 - I have had, and am still having huge difficulties with this verse! Why? How can you receive something that is already implanted? Implanted being – to insert into a person's body! So, whilst it must be possible to keep receiving from God, **how, bearing in mind that He has already (v18) brought about new birth by His will and implanted His Word into our hearts, can you keep on receiving it?**



Think “PYREX DISH”, yes! Think “PYREX DISH”, but not just a brand new one, think about the one you have at home, which is clean, used, but stained. Are you thinking of that “PYREX DISH”? For the married and single men with us, this is what it looks like (hold up our used Pyrex dish)! The Pyrex dish is the Christian with the implanted Word of God in them, it has taken root (the Word of Truth v18, the Gospel about Jesus Christ), for the Pyrex dish to be used continually, it needs to be cleaned after every usage! The born again Christian, which is the Pyrex Dish, needs to be constantly cleaned, how, by receiving continually the implanted Word of God, which is able to save the soul, the process of sanctification. For the Pyrex dish, its hot water and Fairy Liquid!

In other words, our souls depend on the implanted Word, and our souls depend on receiving the Word. If you decide that you don't need to receive the Word, you are like a Pyrex dish who decides he doesn't need to be **CLEANED!** If you are spiritually dead, you can carry through that decision. You can choose not to **WANT TO BE CLEANED!** But if you are spiritually alive, you can't. The implanted Word is powerful; it produces life and cleanliness. It demands the life-giving Word.

**MEEKNESS?** We are instructed to continue to receive God's Word with meekness, total trust and submission to the Word of the Lord! We are not to be hard-hearted, or to place ourselves above the Word of God! We must be willing to receive God's Word submissively!

### **OBEY THE WORD! V22-27**

“It is impossible to read the Bible and not get a sense of how central the Word of God is. God creates by his Word (Genesis 1) and he rules by his Word (Exodus 19). Because God makes himself known to us through his Word, Jesus is described as the Word (John 1). It is no surprise then that the Word of God (a.k.a. the Bible, the Word from God to us about his Son, the Gospel) lies at the very heart of what it means to be the people of God. Through it, God makes himself known, creates new life and rules his world and his people” (Cited in unpublished Book on James, pg 43).

For us to really grow in our understanding of v21, it helps if we can answer the following 3 questions, before looking at v22-27:

1. Why do we need to be born again? John Ch3:1-11
2. How are we born again? 1<sup>st</sup> Peter Ch1:23
3. How does new birth come about? James Ch1:18

Praying and meditating on the Word of God are the heartbeat of the Christian life. You can't sustain prayer without the Word of God, and you can't experience the living power of the Word of God without prayer. They go hand in hand. Where does the Word of God rank with your most cherished possessions? Nothing apart from God Himself is more important and powerful than His Word.

James continues with his focus on God's Word, the Word of Truth v18, the implanted Word v21, and instructs his readers, the necessity to obey God's Word, by doing what it says v22 +v23!

He uses a clear metaphor to illustrate his point!

“James illustrates his point with reference to someone who looks at himself in a mirror and then as soon as he walks away forgets what he has seen. Too much could be read into this illustration when the point James is making is essentially quite simple. To forget immediately would be to have taken in nothing and would require an immediate return. As such, it is an entirely pointless exercise. That's the absurdity of those who merely listen to the word. By contrast, the individual who will receive God's approval is the one who keeps looking intently into the word, remembers what it teaches and then puts it into practice” (Cited in unpublished Book on James, pg 21-22).

But in what ways does James specifically want his readers to be obedient and be “doers” the Word?

1. V26 bridle his tongue
2. V27 visit orphans and widows
3. V27 to keep oneself unstained from the world

“Orphans and widows stand as representatives of the weak, vulnerable and marginalised in society. This representation would have been very familiar to the Jewish Christian readership because they receive frequent and special mention in the Old Testament (cf. Deuteronomy 14:28-29: “At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's

produce and store it in your towns, 29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands”; 16:11: “And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you”; v.14: “Be joyful at your Feast—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns”; Isaiah 10:1-2: “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, 2 to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.”). They would have been particularly pertinent to James and his readers because of the economic difficulties being experienced by the wider community. The ‘orphans and widows’ would have been the very people who suffered most. They would have been most acutely aware of the difficulties of life. They may even have been suffering the loss of husbands and fathers because of the acute economic pressures within the area (cf. 5:6). Society as a whole would probably have acted with indifference towards them as others struggled to provide for their own needs. Unfortunately, it would seem that the community of faith acted no differently. They had imbibed (absorb - assimilate) the spirit of the age and were altogether worldly in their treatment of the needy and suffering. Whatever claims to religion they hid behind, it was at this basic level of taking care of the needy, and so fulfilling the law of Christ, that their claims to religion were seen for what they truly were” (Cited in unpublished Book on James, pg 23-24).

We need to care for the needy, orphans and widows in particular. We can demonstrate our obedience to God's implanted Word, by receiving it with meekness and caring for the most vulnerable within society. Family, who have no family members to care for them!

James will from Ch2 – Ch5:6 go into much more detail, using 26 more imperatives, to encourage the born again Christians in their walk, so that whilst being wronged, they do not wrong themselves or wrong others!

### **APPLICATION**

We need sanctifying!

We need to receive God's Word, with meekness!

There is a religion, which pleases God!

Whose responsibility is it to encourage ‘good bible learning’ within our churches? (p.14)

How can you play your part?