

# (1) THE KEYSTONE TO LIFE

## James 1: vs 1-8

Ps Terry Calkin – 11 April 2010

***James 1: vs1-4 “ James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”.***

James is saying - in the world, as a Christian, you will have trials, but your faith will make you perfect and complete, lacking nothing. “Faith” is one of this world's most misunderstood words. In a Biblical context it is not a noun - it is a verb. Faith, for a Christian, is an action, but more than that, it is like the keystone of an arch - it is simple, fits perfectly into life, and gives our lives strength, beauty, simplicity and stability.

Romans developed the arch, the mighty aqueducts - amazingly simple, but fantastically strong and durable. It is the keystones that hold the bridges together, and faith is the keystone that holds our own lives together.

Now faith is a verb. We are talking about having a living, vital, breathing, active faith that locks your whole life together and makes it a thing of strength and beauty.

### **1. FAITH AND STABILITY - verses 2-4**

Church, I am not going to gloss over what we have been through recently. It has been an extreme test of our faith as we have sought to lead this church in a Godly manner. We have had some difficult challenges along the journey. People who love us and have seen our pain have said, “Why don't you just walk away?” - but our reply is, “We would if we could, but God has called us to stand firm and trust Him despite what the circumstances look like”.

With more pressure, the keystone of faith is able to carry the weight. The greater the weight, the more the keystone of faith strengthens the structure of our lives. That's the principle of the arch. In the natural, fighting wears us out - it's debilitating - but faith strengthens us and makes us complete, ***“Perfect and complete, lacking nothing”.***

Faith gives our lives stability and strength. The principle of the keystone is to distribute the load, and that's exactly what faith does - it distributes the load. We share it with Jesus Himself. **1 Peter 5: v7** says, ***“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”***. It's a great little verse.

**1 Peter 5: vs8-10** ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you”***.

Peter expressed same thought as James - be steadfast in faith. You may suffer a little, but after that you will be perfect, established, strengthened and settled. The Greek word for “care” is *“MERIMNA”*. “to divide” - and the key thought here is that faith, the keystone, divides the load. We take the burden, the load, the fear we have, and give it to Jesus.

## **2. BEAUTY - verse 4**

Simple faith changes lives. It heals, it motivates, it corrects, it brings out beauty when all that's there is ugliness. This life is grubby, because it is infested with Me - Self - Ego. Most live to satisfy themselves. Selfishness is never a beautiful thing, but faith can move on a pile of ugly old stones and rocks and build them into a beautiful arch of strength and stability. Faith is simply trusting God. Faith says, “God I can't make head nor tail of this mess, but God I trust you, casting ***“all your care upon Him because He cares for you”***.”

The ugliest thing in life is self. The Bible says, ***“all we like sheep have gone astray”***. We like to do what we like to do. One of the three deep needs of every human is to be loved, so we go around seeking love but never giving it. That's selfishness - that's sin.

## **3. PATIENCE - verse 4**

When we strike challenges in life, we say “I will fix it”. Faith says, “Be patient - God will fix it”. The word “perfect” better translated “mature”. A mature Christian is one who waits in the middle of a crisis and allows God to work. How often we want to rush in to protect our “self”. Our “self” generally needs no protection. Things annoy us when our goals are being blocked, and we react to try and protect our delicate selves. God says just stand back and see the salvation of the Lord. Patience is the mark of spiritual maturity.

**Proverbs 16: v32** says, ***“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city”***.

Patience is the measure of maturity. A patient person is greater than he who rules a city, and it is faith that produces patience. How does it do that? Faith says, "I do not have to react because God will sort it out. If I have been hard done by then God will be my rescuer". As His Word says, "***there is nothing hidden that will not be uncovered***". So that confidence in God as my Deliverer allows me to sit quietly and trust Him.

***Psalm 37: 1, 7, 8*** Do not fret = do not worry.

***Psalm 37: 23-25 - "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread".***

#### **4. STRENGTH - James 1:5-8**

Strength comes from design. We are made in God's image - He made us to be strong. Strength of faith doesn't come from this flesh, but trusting God in simplicity to overrule and protect and deliver - and you have to hang in there.

Here's the point about faith which is seldom really understood. Faith is knowing God's Word - but it is more. Many know God's Word but don't believe it, so faith is knowing and believing God's Word, but James says, in ***chapter 2: v19 "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble!"*** So faith is knowing God's Word, believing God's Words and acting on, and in accordance with God's Word, and acting on it is the nub of walking as a Christian in faith - and that's where 99.9% of our problems come from - failure to live and act in accordance with this Book. Listen, as soon as problems arise, most of the time we act and react according to our own perceptions, and that's selfishness. Forget truth - it's what I think that is important. Forget God's way - it's my way.

Church, James is a challenge to the way we live our lives. Beware, there is another 11 weeks to go!!

So faith produces stability, beauty, endurance and strength.

The trial, or the test, of our faith is to produce God's character in our life - Enjoy!!