

Sunday, March 2, 2025 pm

Studies in James (3) CONCERNING TRIALS (2) James 1:2-8

In our last lesson of this study we began James' encouragement to count it all joy when you fall into various trials. We addressed how as Christians we are very likely to face trials from time to time (some self-inflicted and others because of our faithfulness). James began to encourage these brethren by noting they ought to count it all joy when facing various trials. We noted in that lesson several "benefits" of facing our trials (rather than avoiding them), including that it can produce patience (endurance) which is mentioned in our text. He also noted that we are to let that patience develop so that we will be mature, "perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Today, we continue our study beginning with vs. 5.

- I. **Further instructions.** STILL dealing with the trials, in our text, James next gives instructions to help. He notes that if you lack wisdom, primarily about what you are going through, you ought to ask God for guidance and understanding.
 - A. The word "wisdom" is a word that includes both knowledge and understanding. Louw & Nida (32.32) defines the word as, "the capacity to understand, and, as a result, to act wisely."
 - B. In context, James is being specific about what we are asking wisdom for – understanding as to WHY we are facing a trial(s) and how to deal with it.
 - C. The better you understand a situation, the better equipped you will be to deal with it. NOTE that the answer you find may not be pleasant or the one you want. And furthermore, you may NOT find all the answers, especially the specific "why".
 - D. I think of Job whose only desire was to question God as to why he was going through everything (Job 31:35, 13:3). An interesting thought about the book of Job, we are never told that YHWH told him what happened (perhaps He did). Job in all his suffering wanted to know why, but NEVER did he deny God.
 - E. James will elaborate on this wisdom later - James 3:17 speaks of the wisdom from above.
- II. **Ask of God – there are things we can ask of God.**
 - A. Prayer is about going to God with your requests through Jesus – Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 5:14-15, etc. – according to His will. God WANTS us to approach Him with our needs.
 - B. God WANTS us to understand how suffering and trials can make us better, cf. Hebrews 12:11.
 - C. God GIVES this wisdom to all liberally and without reproach. In this statement we find 3 points about God.
 1. He provides this to all – that is ANYONE has access to Him.
 2. He gives abundantly and generously – God is not a god of scarcity. Everything He does is with abundance. Furthermore, the word *gives* is also a present tense verb. Cf. Ephesians 3:20-21. 2 Corinthians 9:15 – thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.
 3. Without reproach. The word reproach means to criticize or blame. As we approach God, we need to do so with the understanding that He does not judge the same way we do. His mercy and grace are abundant (Romans 5:17, 2 Corinthians 9:8, 1 Timothy 1:14). We will not wear out God when we approach Him with a humble and reverent spirit. More on this in a moment (addressing our faith).
 - D. Also understand that the wisdom we are asking for is NOT knowledge. Knowledge involves information. Wisdom is insight to deal with that information. My point - What He gives will not be

miraculously supplied. Consider this in light of Matthew 7:7-11 where Jesus said, “Ask and it shall be given unto you...” NOTE in that text how after we ask, we also seek and knock, both of which are actions on our part. We need to find the knowledge and apply it. Consider much of Proverbs 1-9 for an expose’ about wisdom.

E. NOTE. The word “ask” is a present tense verb, meaning it is ongoing. We continually ask Him.

III. **But let him ask in faith with no doubting.**

A. We have here a condition of our requests to God. Again, this is not always easy to do, but it is a condition He requires. Understand that He is not the problem, we are. We get in the way of ourselves. And Satan, our enemy, LIES to us and tries to convince us that God does not want to hear our prayers.

B. *Let him ask in faith with no doubting.*

1. The word doubting can mean doubt as we think of it, or hesitation to believe.
2. When you go to God, do you genuinely believe that He will hear you?
3. If you are doubting when you pray. Why? Is it because of Him or you?
4. This is about approaching God knowing that He hears and answers, EVEN IF it is not the way we want (cf. Matthew 26:39-42 – Jesus in the garden; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – Paul’s thorn in the flesh. Hebrews 11:6 – without faith we cannot please Him).

C. *For he who doubts is like the wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*. Not necessarily a storm but just look at waves at the ocean. They come and go without a consistent pattern (some larger, some smaller). And as you “bob up and down” you are also unstable. James uses this as an illustration of our doubts.

D. *Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord* – God wants to save us and help us, but He is not going to reward one not totally committed to Him. How often in scripture do we find conditions attached to God’s rewards? e.g., Hebrews 5:8-9, Galatians 6:9 – let us not grow weary in doing good...; 2 Peter 1:8-11, so an entrance will be supplied IF you do these things...; etc.

E. *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

1. The word double-minded is unique to James (in fact, according to Dan King, contemporary Greek writings never used the word, but it was found in later Christian writings by Clement and others).
2. It is found here and in James 4:8 where James is describing one who is trying to cling to the world and to God at the same time.
3. It is a word that literally means, “two-souled”. The point is his mind is divided. He wants to trust God WHEN it’s convenient but trusts himself at other times. This is WHY his prayer is not answered. He is NOT consistent.
4. Faith in God demands consistency. It is best demonstrated in difficult times. Consider Matthew 6:24, also Luke 9:23-24 – will we deny ourselves.

F. How does this doubt factor into our requests to God?

1. First, it describes one not truly loyal or trusting in God. So, his prayers are often superficial or offered without repentance. Chances are, his problem is MORE than just making a request to God. Consider the rich, young ruler of Matthew 19:21-22 – He went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to fully surrender to God.
2. There may be doubt in God’s love and promises. Consider one who says, “I am too wicked for God to forgive me or hear my prayers.” This is a man thinking of God in human terms. But, as we have noted, God is NOT human. He is God and his mercy and grace are greater than our sins (cf. Romans 5:20-21, Ephesians 2:4-6, Romans 5:8, etc.). He does not hold

grudges like man. He WANTS to forgive! Of course, we have to come to Him in repentance and are striving to walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:5-7), etc.

3. Remember, true faith is about trusting Him unconditionally. Duane Warden, commenting on these verses said, *“Faith and doubt cannot continue to coexist in the same heart. In time, either the faith will destroy the doubt or the doubt will destroy the faith. The harboring of both faith and doubt removes from one all consolation and all hope that faith holds forth. Faith is “the assurance of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1), but it is only assurance for those who are willing to turn loose of doubt and to believe. Belief coupled with doubt is guaranteed to produce frustration and despair.”*¹

It is very likely that we all face trials from time to time. And when they come our way, the question is about how will we deal with them. Will we trust God, go to Him asking for wisdom to deal with our trials, and faithfully serve Him no matter what? Or will we go to Him with a divided heart, doubting His power and desire to help us. As true believers (his audience), James presents the choice we ought to choose. The question we are left with is which one will we choose? Consider the admonition of Moses to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19-20, *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”* Think about it!

¹ Warden, Duane, Ph.D., Truth for Today Commentary: James. Resource Publications, Searcy, AR. © 2020.