

Daily Bible Study

“How To Grow In Trials – Part 2”

James 1:5-8

February 26– March 4, 2023

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –This week we will continue our study, looking at how we can grow and mature in the midst of the *various trials* of life that we all face. We take as our text, **James 1:5-8**: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*” In this Epistle of James, we often seem to have a text that feels like a disjointed series of thoughts, sentences and paragraphs. James has been called “The Proverbs of The New Testament” by scholars. It sometimes reads as does Proverbs; various allusions, illustrations and wise practical advice at times feeling thrown together in a jumbled, random mess. In reading we sometimes have to ask ourselves why this follows that and what is the line of thought James is using. As we move on in **verse 5**, (*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*) we are given a clue to follow on how James is connecting his thoughts. He has linked **verse 5** back to **verse 4** by using a word that is found in each of them; ...*lacking in nothing*. (**verse 4**) and ...*any of you lacks*... (**verse 5**). In **verse 4** he speaks of a day when we would be fully mature, *lacking in nothing*. But each of his ancient readers as well as those of us today understand we are not at the place of being fully mature and without *lack*. We even may be already horribly confused trying to figure out why we should *count it all joy* when we experience *various trials*. Rejoicing in our trials by no means feels like a stepping stone to growing and maturity. To have that perspective, we need, in a word, *wisdom*: the *wisdom* that sees all life as serving the purposes of the Lord. The wise person is able to see life as James pictures it in **verses 2–4**; making personal decisions, even amid difficulty and progressing towards maturity which God has promised to those who have their faith tested. To know this requires *wisdom* which is a gift from God.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Give me the wisdom I need to understand Your Word and the lessons You have placed in it for my growth.*

TUESDAY – **James 1:5**: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*” In keeping with his practical approach to things, James teaches us with a beautiful directness and simplicity. He says whoever lacks wisdom can ask for it, and God will give it. Being that straightforward and simple is either totally unrealistic, or it is justified in what one knows about God. For James, it

is that he knows the God he is speaking about. He can afford to make such large promises in God’s name because he knows that God will honor this request. There is so much that we can learn from this verse. First, we learn that it is God’s nature to give; He is the ultimate giving Father. Literally the Greek text reads, “...*let him ask from the giving God.*” English grammar makes us write it out differently to include the remainder of what James says in the sentence but the emphasis in Greek is on the attribute of God as a giver. James sees God as my children see me; the providing, giving dad. It has been stated, “No one attribute expresses all that is true about God, but each expresses something about him that is true all the time.” We call God gracious but there is much more to His nature than just grace. But there is never a time when He ceases to be gracious. The same is true when He is called a giver. *Giving God* is not the entire truth. He is more than giving, but he is always giving. His attributes are as infinite as He himself is. Incredible in our text is that not only will He give *wisdom*, but He will *liberally give* it to all who *ask Him*. This beloved is unrestricted bounty. *Liberally* may be as good as we can get in English, but this Greek word is deep and rich. Stay with me now for a little Greek grammar lesson. The word here translated *liberally* is *haplōs* which literally means “simply, sincerely”. The adjective form (*haplous*) which the Lord used in **Matthew 6:22** referring to a man having a *sound or single eye* literally means “single, simple, and whole”, not divided or double vision if you will. The noun form (*haplotēs*) is used to speak of a “single-mindedness, undivided” devotion to the Lord Jesus (**2 Corinthians 11:3**), or a slave’s loyalty to a master (**Ephesians 6:5**). The same word is used of giving generously in **Romans 12:8** and **2 Corinthians 8:2**. So we see that this word and word group meaning “simply, sincerely, single” is also used in Scripture to speak to generosity and liberal, generous giving. What is being said of God is that He is a generous *giver* marked by selflessness, or a single-minded concern and an undivided devotion and preoccupation for the person to whom He is giving. He has His mind set upon this one task of giving with a selfless, total concern for us like this is all He has to do. He also gives to us *without reproach*. God is not a harsh, stingy dad! He is a loving father who wants the best for His children and He does not play favorites or show favoritism.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, I thank you for being such a generous and devoted Father. Help me love you, see you, and praise You as the giving dad you are. May I also learn to come and ask You for the wisdom I need to understand life and see it the way You would want me to.*

WEDNESDAY – **James 1:5-6**: “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*” In this text of Scripture the generous, loving, forbearing nature of God is revealed to us. Also, we find a very incredible reality concerning our prayers. We see the possibilities available to us as God’s children in prayer. Not merely possibilities but as a matter of fact, the true reality that we can ask God for wisdom and He will give it. But there is also something else to take into account. As the text continues we find there are some qualifiers to receive wisdom from God in

prayer. What is incredible in these two verses is that we see contrasted the unquestioned sincerity of God who desires that we grow and mature and therefore He will not withhold from us the wisdom we need. But the next verse questions our sincerity. *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting...* Do we have a genuine trust in God's character, purpose and promises? Do we want to progress and mature with God? Are we whole-heartedly committed to His way of seeing and doing things and His desires and ambitions for our future? Or are we keeping a door open for our way of how things should be and should be done? God's mind is clear and without doubt but what about ours? Many Christians do not get wisdom from God because they DO NOT TOTALLY TRUST HIM. This is so simple yet profound. The chastisement from God gets more severe as we continue on but seriously, do you trust God? We say we do and then we fret, stew, fear and question everything that happens in our lives and world and figuratively spit in the face of The Almighty as we *doubt* Him and yet "ask for wisdom". Sadly, we don't really want His wisdom because we can't even accept what He is at work doing in the world and our lives. We are great at questioning Him and telling Him and others "what's really taking place in current events" and what "the real plan is". You missed it brother and sister. In God's words, you are "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." *But let him ask in faith...* The writer of Hebrews reminds us that "without faith it is impossible to please God..." (**Hebrews 11:6**). Jesus reminded us that "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (**Matthew 21:22**). The problem is our request is often not sincere as we *doubt* and don't really believe God will honor it. A person like this is among other things like an immature child, moved all over the place in their thinking like *a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*. What's more is that Satan attacks the immature person in matters of doctrine as well "Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth" (**Ephesians 4:14** –NLT). How sincere is your faith and trust in God?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me trust You sincerely regardless of the circumstances and trials that arise in my life and Your world. I often doubt You and Your Word while believing everything else. Forgive me of this sin. Help me ask You in faith for wisdom to live by.*

THURSDAY – **James 1:7:** "For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;" This verse is pretty straightforward in reference to how doubt affects one's prayer life. Doubt and lack of trust and faith in God takes the power and efficacy out of prayer. The verse even seems to speak to the cold smugness that often underlies our lack of trust in God. We are actually so proud that we won't humble ourselves under God and His purposes yet we also *suppose* that "because nobody's perfect" we'll be alright doubting God, He will still deliver for us. James is clear to remove all the presumption when he says *...let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord*. As mentioned James points out the power of prayer is weakened and is tragically stripped of power. The Lord Jesus taught the same thing when, for example, He commented that those who forgive can confidently ask for forgiveness,

but those who are unforgiving will go unforgiven (**Matthew 6:14–15**). He also says that the unmerciful person will find no mercy for themselves (**Matthew 18:23–35**). God says, how can I give you forgiveness when you're not in fact concerned for forgiveness? And why should you receive mercy when there is no place for mercy in your life? James is teaching us that a man of doubt, who is not singularly devoted and trusting The Lord should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. When we pray for either wisdom, forgiveness, mercy or whatever, we can be confident that God will hear and answer if in fact we are sincere, trusting, believing and loyally devoted to Him.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, forgive me for all the times I have prayed to You and have asked for something without believing or with a heart divided and not trusting You completely.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – **James 1:8:** "...he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." As we close out our text for the week we see James elaborates on the doubting man and speaks of him as one who is a walking civil war. He calls him the *double-minded man*. One mind tells him to trust God, but he no sooner resolves to and the other mind begins to point him to all of his problems and suggests that they are too great even for God! Sound familiar to anyone? We all at times live here but this person has made this a staple of how they live and think and it is deadly and dangerous. Literally the Greek language means "two-souled". This term is unique to James in the NT and in Greek literature. Many believe James coined it. It possibly comes from the OT's "double-heart" (**Psalms 12:2**). It was used early and often by the early church, which is possibly an evidence for the early date of this letter. In Paul Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, this is seen in "Mr. Facing Both Ways." James uses the term again in **4:8**. This man is "two-souled, with divided soul". This isn't like our English term "two-faced" which speaks of duplicity but rather it speaks of an internal division of thinking which is explained by the same man facing both ways. A man like this is *unstable in all his ways*. Because he won't trust God but instead will *lean on his own understanding* (**Proverbs 3:5**) or fear or thoughts or whatever, he becomes an unstable mess in *all his ways*. Jesus had his own thoughts about the person who would "serve two masters" (**Matthew 6:24**), pointing out that divided loyalties cannot be sustained but must finally be settled one way or the other. James' illustration however is not referencing merely eternal consequences but sadly, present ones. The whole of a person's life is *unstable (akatastatos)* "fickle, staggering, restless" because of this divided trust. If we are not secure with God, then we are not secure at all. Remember this context is about the trials and tribulations of life. The man who can trust and rejoice in trials knowing God is trustworthy and in control, can ask God for wisdom and guidance and receive it. He will not be a hot mess but rather will be stable and blessed for The Lord blesses the one who loves and trusts Him completely.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, help me not be the unstable man in these verses. Help me not trust my own understanding but rather trust You. Help my life be changed from an unstable and undependable mess to one that is consistent and constant growing through my trials."*