

## Book of James - Don't be Double-Minded (James 1:5-8)

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Well, if you'll turn to the book of James, chapter one, and we're revisiting the passage that we were in last week, I'm going to read it for you. I'll read from verse two. 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.

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. Well, we covered this text last week, but there's more in here that I want to address.

And I think that would benefit us from thinking through, before we move on. And that is this question of the direction, the orientation of our thought. The quality of our faith.

And the reasonableness of what James says here. It might seem to us, at 1st thought, that what James is saying is kind of... it provides hope and then it withdraws hope. It provides an answer and then it withdraws the answer.

And the reason that it withdraws the answer is that it's very, very hard to get rid of doubt. James is saying, don't doubt at all. And how many of us, especially when we're in trouble, can say that we don't doubt at all.

It's like it's at those times when trials and sufferings come, and when we're going through the grinder, those are the times that we probably most might be inflicted with doubts. And so what is James doing? Is he setting the bar too high for us?

He's saying, yes, if you want wisdom, then ask of God, but if there's any doubt whatsoever, you're not going to get it. Is that what he's saying? He's not saying that, okay?

And so I want to go through his meaning in this text. He's kind of a, he's, as I said, James is the, like the book of Proverbs. It's a wisdom book.

And so he writes in this way of kind of proverbial way of putting across. Biblical truth. He also reflects, of course, the sermon on the mount, and Jesus words there.

So our text says after he's talked about falling to various temptations and trials and testings, and the need for perseverance. He then says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. Well, the U that may need to ask God for wisdom.

It's the same you that falls into various trials. And so there's a context here that's very important that we understand. It is that James is not concerned with wisdom universally.

He's not concerned with wisdom for which car should I buy? Should I spend money in this area or not? For many of the things in life, he's not concerned with, okay, I pray to God, and as long as I don't doubt, God's gonna give me wisdom, and then I can make that decision like that.

You see? And I'll explain why that is in a moment. But that's not the context.

That's not the right interpretation of this text. And perhaps for some of you, That's a relief. But we'll get to that in a minute.

Wisdom in your trials. Wisdom in your need to persevere, your need to be patient. You know, what patience, what it demands of us is that we don't have all of the answers, we wait.

For answers. We don't have all of the understanding of how to go forward. We wait to know how to go forward.

In other words, patience is very often about unanswered questions. If we could just know. Well, we wouldn't need to be patient anymore, would we?

We see. We wouldn't need to, be concerned about the question marks that, we've got to have answered. I mean, we've got to go through this thing called life.

We have to go through it in moments, in time, and it would be so nice if we could just go through it and see the road ahead. And see all of the turns and all of the things that are coming up. Yes?

But of course, it didn't take any patience to do that. It doesn't take any perseverance, does it? Perseverance.

Hard word. It's like, you know, it goes together with trial really well. And that's what he's talking about here.

He's talking about trials. And so in those trials, and in the midst of that, having to be patient and to persevere and not have all your questions answered, that is when you can ask God for wisdom. Do you see?

So you can see the practical turn that this has. If any of you are in a trial, and you're just not sure what to make of it.

Go to God. And ask for wisdom to deal with this trial, this situation. And God will give it to you.

Because God is personal. God's not a machine up there, that you have to press the buttons with, you know, in order to get out what you need for the day. God is personal.

And God will respond to you personally. So the way that you go to God, the way that I may approach God will impact what I get from God. If I go to God and it's like, Is he really there?

Is he listening? Does he care? If I'm going to God like that, I can't expect to get anything from God, because I'm not acknowledging God as God, do you see?

I'm not actually coming into the throne room of God, realizing that God's on the throne. It's as if I've risen, my soul has risen up in prayer but hasn't landed in the throne room of God. It's like I'm still walking around the outskirts of heaven, as it were, wondering, you know, if God is even in.

If he's present. If he cares. So James is saying here that, no, we've got to have this basic understanding of God that he's good.

Not only is he there, but he's good. And we come to God, not because we understand everything that God's doing, or that God's allowing, Those are different questions. But that we come to God knowing that he's there, that he listens to us, because we are his children, that he delights to hear from us, and that his response to us is not to rebuff us.

It's not to say, why you here again? Why are you bothering me again? Grow up.

You know? No. God, rather, will give wisdom that you need for the trials that you're going through because he's the kind of God that gives wisdom, liberally, and without reproach, which means that God is not, when you go to him, to ask wisdom for the trial that you're going through right now, he's not going to think, well, Henry again.

Let's see how he did in the past. You know, I gave him wisdom. Lets see what he did with it. Well, he was foolish here, and he didn't do too much there.

And, you know, it was a bit up and down over here, and therefore, no, I'm just going to turn you away. You don't deserve wisdom. God will not do that.

You can go to God, and there will be absolute acceptance. Yes, son, yes, daughter. You need wisdom.

I'll give you wisdom for this trial. The fact that you may have misused things or messed up last time, it doesn't even come into the question at all. God receives you.

God will give you wisdom for trials. That's the 1st thing here. Why isn't it wisdom generally?

Why isn't, isn't it that, Lord, I know, I need wisdom to know, whether I should marry this person. I need wisdom to know How to answer this important life question? Why isn't that what James is referring to?

Well, think about it for a second. See, wisdom during suffering is a very practical thing. You need wisdom for that particular suffering.

And the kind of wisdom that you'll get by the way, is going to be humble yourself before the mighty hand of God. It's going to be, give over to God, things that you have no power over. It is to be, rely upon the goodness and the character of God, that he sees you in this difficulty.

It's going to be wisdom along those lines, and therefore, you know, obey God, hoping God, trusting God, know that God is going to do something good, in this situation or get something out of this situation for your eternal good. Teach you to grow a little bit, maybe in the process. You see, there's enough in that confinement of dealing with suffering, dealing with trials and troubles, to understand where wisdom, what wisdom does in that situation.

But if you blow it out to wisdom generally and just living your life, I hope that you can see that, you'll never know if you've got it or not. Because you'll never be able to put your finger on it. You'll be treating wisdom something like, you know, I pray for wisdom, God, for knowing which car to buy.

Car Max. And then you, it's like you open your eyes. And what are you expecting?

You know, shaft of light coming down on a car that you should buy, or, you know, special site that you've got to kind of just bump into the right vehicle? What kind of thing is this wisdom going to look like? Well, you don't know.

You won't be able to identify it. You'd be turning wisdom, which is an objective thing, into a subjective thing, do you see? And if it's subjective, you don't know if it's anchored in God's truth or if it's anchored in your Druthers, what you would rather have.

There are many, many people who have the, They've thought that God was leading them in one way. But they hadn't thought through in a practical way. They hadn't thought through in a careful way.

And, it ended up that, you know, sometime later, things, they got egg on their face, things didn't work out for them. And I guess that wasn't God then. In fact, you've probably recognized what I'm saying there.

I certainly do. We may have asked for wisdom, but, but we, we, were misinterpreting the verse. We asked for wisdom, but we couldn't identify what the wisdom was.

And if it's just, well, I'm going to go forward and do what I think I should do. Well, is that wisdom? That's not wisdom.

I mean, that very, that very idea is unwise. Wisdom generally has been given to us, folks. It's not like God has left us without wisdom.

Where is it? Where is wisdom for this world, for this life? Where is it?

Where does it reside? In the Bible? In the scriptures that we should be attending to, that we should be reading, that we should be thinking through.

That's the wisdom of God there. The scriptures will guide you. It will help you to evaluate things, it will help you to put things in their right importance and priority.

The scripture will tell you, no, this is the world. This is the leading of the world. This is the hankering of people who are not the servants of Christ.

Yes, this thing is a good thing to do because it reflects who Jesus is. It reflects the character of scriptures that talk about Jesus. So you see that we don't have to ask for God, ask God for wisdom generally.

He's already given it to us. If we're attending Bible studies, where it's more than just this pink tea kind of fluffy, you feel good, I feel good. What do you think?

Oh, well, this is what I think, you know? If it's more than that, if it's actually grounded in study, if it's grounded on research, and it's grounded on the basis that we want to learn from God and go out with something that's tangible in this world, well, we are doing all of the things that we should do in order to comport our lives to the Holy Spirit. It's very hard to walk in the spirit if you're not in the scriptures.

It's very hard to know. If you're led by the spirit, When your prayer life is empty. When you're not serving the Lord in any capacity.

A person that's led by the spirit's going to be in the scriptures, they're going to be praying and they're going to

be serving. Those things go together, do you see? We're not trying to make you feel bad here.

I'm not I'm just putting things together that belong together. So, the wisdom that James is talking about is wisdom for a particular issues, troubles, perturbances, trials, suffering. Because there's nothing that can knock us sideways like pain.

Nothing that can discourage us. Like having to get up day in, day out and deal with this stuff again. Whatever it might be.

Yeah, we pray, I hope you don't mind, Julie, going to use you as an example. Should have asked you beforehand. You okay with this? So you couldn't say no.

Could she, really, in front of everybody? But, if you've talked to Julie, I know many of you talk to Julie, and the, you know, the struggles that she has, not just with the shoulder, she has other stuff that's going on too. And she has to live her life with this stuff.

And she had to live a life with this shoulder with a lot of unanswered questions. Okay? A lot of question marks in front of her about how, you know, could she have the operation?

Could she get it paid for? What would it mean? Was it the right decision?

All of this stuff. That's when you ask for wisdom. Do you see?

You ask for wisdom. Okay. Lord, I need wisdom, and the wisdom would be that comes to her would be based on the teaching of scripture would be, give it over to me.

Give it over to me. Don't be anxious about this. I've got this.

Don't do things that are beyond your ability to do. Don't try to sort things out in the future because you don't have power over the future. This is wisdom, do you see?

It narrows your focus. It makes it so that it's not so overwhelming. It gives you the clarity to go forward.

This is what James is referring to. But Understanding that this is what he's talking about. Let him ask in faith with no doubting.

But he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. All right. First thing here.

Let him ask in faith. So what is faith? We got to get the biblical teaching on faith, right, don't we?

So faith is, okay. Okay, right, deep breath. All right, I'm gonna believe, I'm gonna believe, I'm gonna believe, I'm gonna believe, I'm gonna believe.

No, I'm just gonna, no, that's not faith, okay? Faith is not brainwashing yourself. Faith is not using pagan techniques.

To convince yourself, something is so. That's not what faith is at all. Faith is basically.

You've heard me define it this way before. And I think it's the clearest way, the most express way of

understanding what faith is, faith is dependent on God. Lack of faith is independence from God.

You see, that's why we need faith, to bring us to God, yes? All right, so if you understand it that way, Then when we ask, we ask in faith, We ask independence. We depend on God.

When we come to God, we come to him as one that, we say, look, not my will, but yours be done. We come to him and say, Lord, I need your grace. I need your help.

I don't have the strength. For this. I'm weak.

You know, I can't do this in my own power. I don't want to do it in my power. I'm coming to you, God.

I know you're there. I know you hear me. And I need this grace.

I need this help. From you. It's personal.

Do you see? This is where Jesus' advice about prayer comes in. Ask, seek, knock.

Okay? There is a mystery about this that I can't don't fully understand. We'll talk about prayer at another time at the end of when we get to the end of James.

But I do understand ass seek knock. It like, Lord, Lord, Lord. You know, it is like, keep coming back.

It is, I know you're there. I know that you care. And I need your help.

I need this. You see? There's no doubting that.

It's not, Lord, are you really behind that curtain? It's like, Lord, are you really, you're invisible? Are you actually there?

Is none of that. No, we understand God's there. We understand Jesus as a son of God, not he's our intercessor.

We understand that prayer changes things. We know the prayer changes things. We've seen it.

We've seen it in our own lives. We know that God has providentially done things for us in our lives, that we could recognize God did that because he's good. Thanks be to God.

When we've offered thanks to God for things that he's done in our lives. These are tangible things. These are real things that God has said that God has done.

And our thanks go out to a person. He's there. So James is saying, don't treat God as if he's not there.

That's the idea, yes? That's the main thing. Don't treat God as if he's not there.

You go to God. Now you don't know how he's going to answer in every way, but when you go to him for wisdom in trials, you do know how he's going to answer. And the kind of clarity of mind that comes about by seeking wisdom in that moment, and in that time, shows that he has answered.

Let him ask in faith. Faith that God is, faith that God is good, faith that God has is who he says he is in the

scripture. Faith that your prayer, as feeble as it might be, rising up as it were, out of yourself and trying to make its way to glory, might seem to hit the roof.

But actually pierces heaven. Because it's carried not by your spirituality or your strength. It's carried by the Holy Spirit who's within you, and it is presented to God by your own savior.

Do you see? And sometimes we have to shake ourselves and tell us these ourselves these truths again. So that we, as it were, we can reconfigure the machinery, so it works right.

No doubting. There is no reason to doubt that God hears you. Well, he whose doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

So you get the idea. There's that you've got, you have calm waters, and then the wind starts blowing, maybe from different directions, and then it, the waves come up, the water is perturbed, and then it's sloshing around here and there, and there's no constancy to it at all. And James is saying, In your spirit, as you come to God, don't come about like this, as if, you know, is God going to answer this?

Oh, I know he's going to, no, he's not going to answer this. Don't be like that with God. Doubt is not having all of your questions, or rather having no questions answered so that you don't know how to go forward.

That's not doubt. That's just ignorance. Okay?

Doubt is doubt in the character of God. Is he good? Does he care?

You see? So doubt is aimed at the character and the person of God. It's not even seeming in a broader way of looking at things.

Doubt is something that you can't altogether do, or expunge, drive out of your soul in this life. You know, which is why, you know, the guy who had the son who needed healing, he says, well, Jesus said, well, anything's possible to him who believes, and then the, the guy responds and says, I believe, Lord.

And then what else does he say? Help my unbelief. Well, that's fine.

That's fine with God. I believe that bit will take. The unbelief, we understand.

We understand this is a big thing that's being asked for. Never seen anything like this before. So we understand that, but the thing is, belief wins the battle.

Do you see? If he didn't think that Jesus could heal his son, then he wouldn't have come to Jesus. And therefore, you see, faith won the day.

James is black and white here, but he means the same thing. Come in faith. Yes, you might drag a bit of, you might have a few questions, you might drag a bit of doubt with you, but the main thing you're presenting to God, which is borne out by your attitude and your actions is, Lord, I've come to you for something.

Do you say? The doubt in the, in the Greek, it's possible to understand here that the instability that's being spoken of here, it's recorded in verse 8, this instability is caused by worldly thinking. Love of the world, wrong priorities, wrong values.

But don't be like a wave. You know, Paul talks about people who are cast hither and thither by every wind of doctrine. They hear this teaching.

And then I hear that teaching. It's like they can't get any solidity in what they believe. Probably because they're going to the wrong places.

They're being unwise in their choices. They're not listening to the word of God being expounded rationally week after week. Don't be like that.

Don't be a wave. Be like Jesus. Who, when the squall comes and everybody's panicking, he's asleep in the boat.

Now, he's asleep in the boat because he needs sleep. And rest and sleep is the right thing to do. It's not that's not a metaphor for be asleep in, you know, your life, obviously, because Paul says, be children of light, you know, be awake, don't be ignorant.

But it is the right thing to do in trials. In trials, it's like, you can take your rest because God has got this. Give this over to the Lord.

Don't be anxious for things that he doesn't want you to be anxious about. Which is by the way, he doesn't want you to be anxious for anything. So you'd be like Jesus.

Jesus knew he was going to get to the other side. So be like him. Don't be like the waves.

And he says here, let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. How can the Lord give you anything? When, you know, it's, you're not grabbing for it.

Or are you grabbing for it, but then your hand goes back again because you're doubting and you're grabbing for it and goes back again? You got to come to God, to receive. You've got to and to receive, you've got to stay there with God until you get what you want.

He, that kind of person, is a double-minded man unstable in all his ways. Double-minded. What does that mean?

It means that you're focused on this thing over here, and you're just about to grasp it, and then all of a sudden you change your mind and you're focused on something that's the exact opposite of it. You're not sure what you want. You're not sure what's true.

You're not sure who's true. You're not sure if you should rely on yourself or rely on the invisible God, because after all, he is invisible. You're double-minded.

Look, you should have, I should have got this down by now. Jesus was the son of God, and he did come into the world, and he did die for your sin, and if you've trusted him, he's done away with your sin, and he's taken you out of Adam, and he's put you into Christ, and you are now the son, a daughter of God. These things are eternally true of you right now.

You have eternal life given to you. What does not appear. The way that you will be, but you know that when he appears at his 2nd coming, you will be like him.

Glory fied. These astonishing things that are promised to you are promised to you on the basis of something that God has already done. You can stand there.

That's the that's the rock you can stand on. And so every thought. Every value, And we know that we have to constantly work on this.

That's the sanctification. But our inclination and our orientation is God would, We're to seek those things which are above, where Christ is at the right hand of God. Not those things that below.

We're changed. And so as changed people, We know God's there. And if we get thoughts that come into our minds, maybe because we've been absent in reading the scriptures, and fortifying our minds with the scriptures, or because we've not been praying to God, and giving ourselves over to God and our burdens over to him.

Or because we've been, you know, evil communications, corrupt good manners, and we've been hanging around with the wrong people. Or listening to the wrong people on the internet or whatever, do you see? Or reading, the wrong values and the books that we've been reading.

If that's happened to us, we need to stop doing that, and we need to gravitate again towards what we know is true. And we won't be double-minded if we are just obeying God, if we put ourselves again back into the graces of God. If we repent, if we need to, from practices that have drawn us away from God.

The visitations that come upon us as Christians are similar to the visitations that come upon people generally. This is the book of Ecclesiastes talks about this. But the answer for the Christian is that we go in this in this difficulty, in this trial, we go to God, for wisdom, in how to endure it, how to deal with it, how to make sense of it, that there is some value in it in the end.

And if we can't do that, how can God give us anything? How can God give us any wisdom? Because we're double-minded, we're not, we'll not use it.

Jesus said in his high priestly prayer to God the Father in John 17, sanctify them, set them apart by your truth. Your word is truth. For the instable in mind, that is something he grasped onto.

That's stability right there. So, James says, yes, ask for wisdom in trials. Don't doubt.

Don't be wavering like this. God wants to help you in your trials. It's not to give you the answer to every conundrum that you might have, but to help you, to focus in the right way in a situation that you're in, and not worry about other stuff.

What's the cure for double-mindedness? We can be quite quick about this. In James 3, if you'll flick over there quickly.

James chapter 3. James describes Godly wisdom. Verse 13 of James 3.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. Meekness is taking stuff.

That's not pleasant. Being willing to do not your will, but God's will. That's meekness, okay?

So that's something we have to, with God's help, we have to go to God and we have to go hit to him in meekness, saying, Lord, In this situation, in this problem that I'm going through, it's your will I want to do. But if you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. Bitterness, you calling yourself a spiritual person and close to God and walking with God when you got bitterness against somebody else, you're lying to yourself.

Do you see? Sort it out. Stop it, you know?

Best piece of counseling advice that you can have, half the time is, If you're doing this and it's wrong, stop it. Right. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

We'll come back to this when we get to this place later on in the book. But look at verse 17. The wisdom that is from above is 1st pure.

Your conscience is clear. Your motives are right. Yeah?

It's just not, you have no sinful inclinations about using this wisdom in the wrong way. It's 1st pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, Full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy. There you go.

If that's not your view of wisdom, how can you receive that wisdom from God? God will give you the kind of wisdom that matches, that disposition that matches that person that you want to be? Now, if that's what the kind of person that you know you should be, I hope you can see that you're not going to be a double-minded person.

Because you're already invested in the truth of God and in obedience to God. Do you see that? You've already got a direction.

You've already discounted. A whole bunch of other alternatives. You're going with God.

So you're not double-minded, do you say? Jesus says, build your life upon the rock, not the sand. What's the rock?

His word on it. Yeah, him and his word. His word.

Matthew chapter 14. And verse 28. You know this, I'm going to read it to you, though.

Peter, he sees Jesus walking on the water. Jesus says, be of good cheer at his eye, do not be afraid. Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.

So he said, come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat. He walked on the water to go to Jesus.

He's walking on the water. It's astonishing. But when he saw the wind was boisterous, When the trial came, as it were, this is what it means.

He was afraid. And beginning to sink. He cried out saying, Lord, save me, and immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said to him, oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt?

He didn't say, oh, I'm so sorry, you're all wet and you know, you were scared and terrified. How are you

doing? Are you okay?

You didn't say that? He said, you have little faith. Why did you doubt?

Well, he doubted because he took his eyes off Jesus, didn't he? He doubted because he looked at his own weakness instead of looking to whom he should do. He doubted because he depended on himself when he should have been depended on, depending on Jesus.

That's the difference between faith and no faith. That's the difference between single-mindedness and doublemindedness. So the cure for double-mindedness is focus on Jesus.

Do you see? You can't go wrong. You can't go wrong.

Read the gospel. Remind yourself of what Jesus said, of what Jesus did, of the kind of person that he is, and as your savior and as your brother and as your friend. He's for you.

So do you want wisdom during your trials? Do you want wisdom to go through the situations you're going through? The very mention of patience means you're not just going through it for a day.

You need to endure, you need to persevere. So, You'll have to keep going back to Jesus, but he's the where you need to go. Draw your strength for the day from God, because he's for you.

Draw your contentment from the fact that Miracle of all miracles, you're a child of God. You're adopted into his family. Draw your strength from the promises that are true about you.

That will settle you. That will make you strike out in the right direction or in Bunyan's language. It will keep you on the path towards the celestial city.

No need to doubt. Maybe there's a few doubts and so on that will follow you in their train, but you know what the main thing is that you are going towards God. And God is good and he's liberal and he gives without reproach.

That's come to him now as we thank him for who he is. Dear Father, we pray. Forgive us, Lord, when we fail in these areas.

Which we know that this word says you will and you do. Help us in whatever trials we may be going through to ask wisdom. Wisdom not to worry about things that are beyond our control.

Wisdom to be still, and know that you are God. Wisdom not to flap our mouths. Wisdom to be content that you see us and that you care.

And that this is working good in us, even though it's unpleasant. We thank you, Father, that you take even that which is evil and troublesome and you make good out of it for us. Pray, Father, that we would go forward in wisdom, go forward in trust and utter dependence on you this week, in the name of our Savior.

Amen.