

WISDOM FOR TRIAL

(James 1:5-12)

- A. **The Lord** places a lot of emphasis on the way we think; how we use our minds.
1. Christians are to have renewed minds (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 4:16).
 2. A renewed mind is one that can look beyond the physical concerns of life to God's higher purpose.
 3. When Paul prayed for Christians he usually prayed for their minds.

Col 1:9 – For this reason we also, since the day we heard it [their love in the Spirit], do not cease to pray for you, & to ask **that you may be filled with the knowledge** of His will in all wisdom & spiritual understanding;

Eph 1:15-17 – Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus & your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give to you the spirit of wisdom & revelation in the knowledge of Him,**

[It must have been wonderful to have an apostle pray for your mind, but in our text James tells us that we can & should make that prayer for ourselves. (James 1:5-12).

James explained (2-4) that our faith will triumph over trial because trials serve God's purpose. In this lesson we are given the tools to strengthen our faith to endure trials.]

I. FAITH AWAKENED

- A. **Our tests of faith** should awaken us to realize our constant need for God's wisdom (5a).
1. Like Job our first inclination is to try & figure out why we are having a trial, but that may yield more questions than answers & it may even cause us to doubt God's wisdom & love.
 2. What we need to do when we have trials is to ask our H. Father to give us the ability or the wisdom to see the trial as He does, & to help us learn from it & grow into the image of His Son (4).

B. **Secondly, our tests of faith** should awaken us to realize that God wants to give us wisdom (5b).

1:5 – If any of you lacks *wisdom*, let him ask of **God**, who *gives to all liberally & without reproach*, & it [*wisdom*] will be given to him.

We learn three things from this verse:

1. God is the only source of this kind of insight.
 - a. A lot of people have a degree of wisdom or practical knowledge about life, but human wisdom has limits.
 - b. Only God can grant the wisdom that will enable us to understand what can be gained by the trials we face.
 - c. Primarily, He is interested in building our character to mirror His Son's.

2. God is eager to dole out wisdom generously to His suffering children when they ask for it.

a. The race, gender or age of the Christian who makes this request is not a factor.

b. Have you ever met a young Christian who was wise beyond his years?

3. God will not reproach, criticize or reprimand us for asking for this wisdom.

a. He won't respond, "Didn't you learn from the last time you had a problem?"

b. A prayer for wisdom is a request from God to which He will never say "NO!" (e.g., Solomon)

C. **There is one condition** to gaining wisdom from God – FAITH!

1:6-7 – But *let him ask in faith, with no doubting*, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven & tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord

1. A prayer for wisdom must not be like a request for a pay raise; there can be no uncertainty!

2. To doubt God in this request is to doubt His very nature, which is the essence of “good”.

Matt 7:8-11 – For everyone who asks receives, & he who seeks finds, & to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, ***how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things*** [the Holy Spirit, Lk 11:13] to those who ask Him!

D. **But why would we doubt** that God can give us wisdom to face our trials? **Two reasons:**

1. We just don't see HOW He can help us.
 - a. “My trials are a mystery; there are no answers to what is happening in my life.”

b. “It's difficult to have a totally doubtless faith.”

Mark 9:23-24 (Man whose son had a mute spirit) – Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out & said with tears, ***“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”***

2. We don't truly want to know why we're having trials & what we can learn from them.
 - a. “Okay, I'll pray for wisdom, but I don't expect anything to come from it.”
 - b. “What I really want is a way out of this trial I'm facing.”

[So if we doubt His power to give us wisdom OR if we don't really want His wisdom then we cannot expect to receive God's wisdom & become “perfect & complete, lacking nothing.”

BTW, praying for wisdom, in faith, doesn't mean that God owes US answers to our problems or an explanation of what He is doing (Job found out).

We need to keep in mind that we're on a journey toward spiritual maturity, & God's wisdom is what keeps us on that road as we patiently endure our trials.

Before we move on, let's clear up a misunderstanding about "wisdom".

Wisdom is NOT knowledge.

Knowledge can be learned, memorized & repeated, but that process doesn't make one wise.

A lot of people have Bible knowledge, but they do not have spiritual wisdom. How can you tell?

When a person's knowledge of God's word is evident in their lives, then they have God's wisdom, & vice-versa.

3:13-14 – *Who is wise & understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.* 14 But if you have bitter envy & self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast & lie against the truth.

The wisdom God gives is the practical application of spiritual truth—not just the comprehension of truth.

Next, James explains two things that wisdom will do when our faith is tested.]

II. WISDOM GRANTED

A. **Wisdom** will keep prosperity in perspective.

1:9-11 – *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.* 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, & its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

1. The poor "brother" can rejoice in the fact that he has an exalted position in God's eyes; in Christ he is NOT beneath anyone with whom he shares that relationship.
2. The rich "brother" is humbled by the fact that his endeavors will yield no lasting satisfaction or security; in Christ he is NOT above anyone with whom he shares that relationship.

A wealthy man took his boy to visit a very poor family on a country farm. His purpose was to let his son see the trials & difficulties of poverty. When the visit was over the father asked his son, "What did you think of our trip? What did you learn?"

The boy said, “It was a fun trip dad. I learned that poor people can have more dogs to play with, a bigger yard to play in, a bigger garden to grow vegetables, & a creek to swim in. At night they can sit on the porch, look at the stars & visit with their neighbors.

Dad, we’re really poor compared to those people.

[Divine wisdom will help us see the facade & the illusion of what the world calls riches, so that we can learn to rejoice in the spiritual riches we have in Christ.]

B. **Wisdom** will keep eternity in view.

1:12 – Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1. The crown of life is the goal of wisdom; that’s should be why we want it & ask for it.
2. James borrows the language of his Older Brother.

Matt 5:11-12 – Blessed are you when they revile & persecute you, & say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice & be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 10:20 – Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

3. To the world, [we] Christians are a peculiar people.
 - a. We rejoice over things that hurt us, & we endure it for a reward we cannot see.
 - b. Paul said our current distress cannot be compared to our future glory (**Rom 8:18**).

CLOSING

- A. **The first chapter** of James is an admonition to love & obey our Heavenly Father & our Lord Jesus Christ in difficult times.
 1. Life is a series of tests that come before us to prove the degree of our love for Him.
 2. But God is good, gracious, generous & worthy of our trust when those troubles come.
 3. God does not take anything away from us that He will not replace something far greater.

God's Plan For Our Salvation:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48