

1 **James**

EXHORTATIONS TO PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

2 **Intentional Rejoicing during Purposeful Testing**

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

JAMES 1:2-4

3 **The results of testing**4 **Unswerving constancy**

▶ *James 1:3*

▶ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (KJV)*

▶ *Because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (LEB)*

▶ *Dokimion* perseveres towards goal vs. just tolerates a circumstance.

▶ It is the ability to turn difficulties into greatness and glory.

5 **What is endurance?**

▶ Endurance is a growing determination in the face of adversity, based on hope.

▶ Those who suffer can express joy (v. 2) during times of trial because of their confidence in the day in which Christ will vindicate them.

▶ *But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice and be glad. (1 Peter 4:13, LEB)*

▶

▶

6 **Perfect?**

▶ The word "perfect" has been misinterpreted by some as if it meant an assumed Christian perfection or sinlessness.

▶ It does not mean that, but it means the perfect work of patience, enduring to the end, when self-will is subdued and the will of God is fully accepted.

▶ The result is that there is no deficiency in the practical life of the believer.

▶ The Lord Jesus is an example of it. He never did His own will, but patiently waited for the will of God and yielded a perfect obedience. Faith is power to suffer and to endure trials and testings.

7 **I need wisdom**

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT TO REJOICE IN TRIALS

8 **But how?**

▶ Ok, so I can face trials with joy because when I face trials through with faith, perseverance results. And perseverance will develop me into a thoroughly mature Christian who lacks nothing. It makes me what God wants me to be.

▶ But still, how do I welcome trials with joy? I'm not feeling it!

9 **James 1:4-8**

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:4-8, KJV 1900)

▶

10 **Context is everything**

- ▶ James has told us that we should intentionally rejoice during times of testings, trials, and persecution.
- ▶ But that does not come easily.
- ▶ One translation renders this clause: *"and if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet a particular problem [or difficulty], ask God for wisdom."*

11 **Missing something?**

- ▶ To those who feel confused and frustrated by the high goal of "not lacking anything," James wrote, *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God. It is available for the asking!*
- ▶ Assistance is readily available from "the giving God" (τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ).
- ▶ God will not only provide wisdom, but will do so generously, not grudgingly.
- ▶

12 **Wisdom (Greek vs. Hebrew concept)**

- ▶ The Greek concept of wisdom centers around "knowledge," "cleverness," and "learnedness."
- ▶ In biblical usage, however, especially in the Old Testament, it is basically a practical, moral, and spiritual insight given by God (1 Kgs 3:7–9; Pro 2:3–6, 10–19; 9:1–6).
- ▶ It is the ability to discern right from wrong and good from evil. It is the power that enables a person to do and say the right thing at the right time.

13 **A prayer with a guarantee**

ASK FOR WISDOM AND GOD RESPONDS GENEROUSLY

14 15 16 **Solomon's request for wisdom**

So then, O Yahweh, you are my God. You have made your servant king in place of David my father though I am a young boy. I do not know going out or coming in. Your servant is in the middle of your people whom you have chosen; a great people who cannot be counted or numbered because of abundance. Give to your servant a listening heart to judge your people, to discern between good and bad, because who is able to judge this, your difficult people?" (1 Kings 3:7–9, LEB)

17 **God gave generously to Solomon**

The word was good in the eyes of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and you did not ask for yourself a long life and you did not ask riches for yourself and you did not ask for the life of your enemies, but you have asked for yourself the ability to make wise judgments; behold, I do hereby do according to your word. I hereby give you a wise and discerning heart; there was no one like you before you, nor afterwards will one like you arise. (1 Kings 3:10–12, LEB)

18 **God gives liberally**

- ▶ The adverb rendered "generously" appears only here in the New Testament (*hapax legomenon*)
 - ▶ Without hesitation
 - ▶ Without condition
 - ▶ Without reservation

- ▶ Connected with giving, the adverb can mean “giving with a wide heart,” “giving generously or liberally”

19 **God gives without reproach**

- ▶ God gives us wisdom without making us feel guilty for not using the wisdom He gave us previously
- ▶ God gives wisdom without scolding
- ▶ God gives wisdom ungrudgingly
 - ▶ He is delighted to give wisdom any time we ask
- ▶ God gives wisdom in a way that shows His love and care for us

20 **Another translation of James 1:5**

- ▶ *If any of you need wisdom, you should ask God and he will give it to you. God is generous and will give wisdom to all who ask him, in a way that shows his love and care.*
 - ▶ Loh, I-Jin, and Howard Hatton. A Handbook on the Letter from James. New York: United Bible Societies, 1997. Print. UBS Handbook Series.

21 **We can all pray for wisdom**

- ▶ *For if you cry out for understanding, if you lift your voice for insight, if you seek her like silver and search her out like treasure, then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and the knowledge of God you will find. For Yahweh will give wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.* (Proverbs 2:3–6, LEB)
- ▶ A prayer with a guarantee!
- ▶

22 **Wisdom is a “good thing” from God**

- ▶ *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* (Matthew 7:11, KJV 1900)
- ▶ God’s readiness to give is a motive for our prayer.
- ▶ “Let him ask” = “You should ask God”

23 **To whom does God give wisdom?**

- ▶ *Now if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask for it from God, who gives to all without reservation and not reproaching, and it will be given to him.* (James 1:5, LEB)
- ▶ The “all” has a context here.
 - ▶ God does not give wisdom to everyone
 - ▶ He gives wisdom to those who ask Him for wisdom.
 - ▶ Do not assume you will have wisdom. Ask for it!
- ▶

24 **A habitual prayer request**

- ▶ We can come to Him at all times, and habitually wait on Him for guidance and direction; and as we wait on Him thus and count on Him there will be no disappointment.
- ▶ Often believers think they have divine guidance, but it is but following some kind of an impression, certain impulses, which may come from ourselves, or from the enemy.
- ▶ But constant waiting on the Lord and trusting in Him, this is wisdom.

25 **What is wisdom?**

DESIGN
AUTHORITY

RESPONSIBILITY
SUFFERING
OWNERSHIP
FREEDOM
SUCCESS

26

27 **Wisdom vs. Knowledge**

- ▶ Knowledge is knowing facts. It is a pursuit of the intellect.
 - ▶ But many people have great intelligence, know many facts, and still do stupid stuff or pursue error led astray by their own intellect.
- ▶ Wisdom is practical skills for living life.
- ▶ Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective.
- ▶ Wisdom is both discerning and doing the will of God.

28

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasing to your soul. Discretion will watch over you; understanding will protect you, in order to deliver you from the way of evil, from a man who speaks devious things— those who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in ways of darkness, those who are happy to do evil, for they delight in the deviousness of evil, who are crooked in their ways, and devious in their paths; in order to deliver you from a strange woman, from a foreign woman who flatters with her sayings, she who forsakes the partner of her youth and has forgotten the covenant of her God, for her house sinks to death, and to the dead are her paths. Of all who go to her, none shall return, nor do they reach paths of life. (Proverbs 2:10–19, LEB)

29 **The 7 pillars of wisdom**

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. (Proverbs 9:1, LEB)

1. Design – Accepting how God has made you
2. Authority – Respecting authority in 4 areas: Home, Work, Government, Employment
3. Responsibility – Focus on how God wants you to serve others rather than demanding your rights

30 **The 7 pillars of wisdom (2)**

4. Suffering – Understanding that God allows suffering so that we can glorify Him and have the rough spots in our character made smooth
5. Ownership – Understanding that God owns everything we enjoy
6. Freedom – Being free from sin's power
7. Success – Learning to be obedient to God regardless of the consequences; Meditating on God's Word (Josh 1.8)

31 **Prayer with a Condition**

ASK IN FAITH
NOTHING WAVERING

32 **A change in focus**

- ▶ James now turns from the nature of God's giving to the nature of a person's asking.
- ▶ He signals the shift by using an adversative "But..."

33 **Prerequisites to Praying for Wisdom**

- ▶ To receive God's wisdom in trials, the believer must be wise in asking.
 - ▶ First, he must ask in faith. He must believe and not doubt (*diakrinomenos*, the word for "doubt," suggests vacillating).
 - ▶ He dare not come to God like a wave of the sea, blown [horizontally] and tossed [vertically] by the wind.
- ▶ God is not pleased with a double-minded (lit., "two-souled," *dipsychos*; cf. 4:8) man who is unstable in all he does, like an unsteady, staggering drunk. The answer from God depends on assurance in God.

34 **Asking in faith focuses on RELIANCE**

- ▶ Asking in faith is a matter of trusting in God and relying on his promises.
 - ▶ It is not simply a general belief in the proposition that prayer will be answered.
 - ▶ It is a confidence in God as one who gives generously.
- ▶ Since faith is an action or event word, it is often best rendered as a verb. In this case it may be rendered *when you pray, you must believe God*.

35 36 **With no divided mind**

- ▶ Doubting is the opposite of believing
 - ▶ Doubting means "to differentiate," "to be divided against yourself," and "to waver between two alternatives."
 - ▶ This means that the person who doubts is torn between his allegiance to God and his distrust of God.
- ▶ The two clauses may be rendered as "But when you pray, you must have confidence in God. You must not doubt at all."

37 **Illustration from nature**

- ▶ *But let him ask for it in faith, without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed about.* (James 1:6, LEB)
 - ▶ Surf of the sea, tossed about = High waves toss you up and down
 - ▶ Driven by wind = Persistent; never stops
- ▶ Doubt takes you up and down like a roller-coaster and frequently challenges your believing faith

38 **A child-like faith**

- ▶ All this necessitates childlike faith, which relies on God.
- ▶ If we doubt His faithfulness or question His answer we cannot receive anything from Him.
- ▶ Hesitation about God, a doublemindedness, depending upon something else besides God is, in reality, unbelief: *"For he that wavereth (is not positive in his utter confidence and dependence) is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."*

39 **Having a single focus**

- ▶ If the believer is double-minded, looking to the Lord and at the same time looking elsewhere, he dishonors Him, and He cannot honor the believer and answer his prayer.
- ▶ How blessedly it was expressed by David, which perhaps was remembered by these believing Jews, when the inspired king wrote: *"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him"*

(Psalm 62:5).



40 **A faith that acts on God's will**

- ▶ Abraham was a great example of believing faith
 - ▶ God told him to go somewhere he had never been and that He would give Abraham all the land that Abraham set foot upon.
 - ▶ God told Abraham his son Isaac would be the one through whom he would bless the earth. So, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead.

41 **Hebrews 11:8-9**

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out to a place that he was going to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise. (Hebrews 11:8–9, LEB)



42 **Hebrews 11:17-19**

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered Isaac, and the one who received the promises was ready to offer his one and only son, with reference to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants will be named," having reasoned that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which he received him back also as a symbol. (Hebrews 11:17–19, LEB)



43 **The double-souled person**

- ▶ A doubled-minded person is literally "two-souled" person (used only here and in James 4.8)
 - ▶ It means that their mind will and emotions are like 2 people in one body.
 - ▶ They intellectually believe the facts of God but refuse to rely upon Him for strength and grace.
- ▶ This person will not receive anything from the Lord.

44

45 **Key concept**

- ▶ PERSISTENT DOUBT NULLIFIES FAITH
 - ▶ Faith receives, because it trusts God the Giver.
 - ▶ Doubt is rejected by God.
 - ▶ Prayer accompanied by doubt is like claiming to have faith but showing no works (James 2:17).
 - ▶ Doubt calls Jesus "Lord" but then puts no confidence in Him; it dishonors Him.

46 **What if doubt is habitual?**

- ▶ James was emphatic: double-mindedness mars a "believer's" life.
 - ▶ No part of it remains unsullied.
 - ▶ Filled with ulterior motives, a "believer's" divided thinking is only indicative of divided loyalties. His entire relationship with God, especially in prayer, is marred by his self-perverted faith.

47 **What if doubt is habitual? (2)**

- ▶ But a "Christian doubter" is an oxymoron.
 - ▶ The doubting believer holds back from active trust.
 - ▶ Although such people claim to trust in God, they in fact do not.

- ▶ They may pray the prayers of profession, but they do not pray authentically, that is, the prayers of surrender to God's will.
- ▶ James described such a believer as unstable and restless in everything. Their faith is warped and unauthentic.
- ▶ Habitual doubt of God should cause us to examine our faith.

48 **What if doubt is habitual? (3)**

- ▶ Why should such a person expect anything from God through prayer?
- ▶ James's intent was to point out that doubting believers constantly manifest an ineffectiveness of faith that suggests the nonauthenticity of belief.
 - ▶ This exposure of inadequate faith is the primary burden of the first chapter, and James reiterates it throughout.

49 **So, what should we do?**

- ▶ If our faith is authentic, we should daily seek God's wisdom for life:
 - ▶ Prayer
 - ▶ Interacting with Scripture
- ▶ If we claim to have faith but fail to rely on God, then we need to examine whether our faith is real. If we ask doubting, our prayers are ineffective because our doubts dishonor our Savior.