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In the last lesson, we discussed trials in our lives, our responses to them, and how God wants to use them to build strength, perseverance, and character in our lives. In the context of this issue, we come to James 1:5, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*"

There is an important difference between knowledge and wisdom. One acquires knowledge by learning facts. But wisdom concerns the application of knowledge - knowing how to rightly use that which we know. There are moral and spiritual elements in true wisdom. Scripture teaches us of godly wisdom versus worldly wisdom.

Why do we specifically need to ask for wisdom when we are going through trials? We can (and should) ask God for strength, courage, grace, and even deliverance from a trial if it is God's will.

But, we need godly wisdom to help us understand how to use the circumstances of trials and tribulations for our good, for the good of others, and for God's glory. We need wisdom to see beyond the circumstances and see God's hand at work. We need wisdom to understand that God wants to use these trials in fulfilling His purpose in us, and for us, and through us.

This godly wisdom is important in helping us to develop the spiritual maturity that God desires for us, which is a theme throughout the book of James. It takes spiritual maturity to "*be still and know that (He) is God*" (*Psalms 46:10*), and to "*cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*" (*1 Peter 5:7*).

Through godly wisdom, we develop the maturity to understand that God is *always* there and is *always* God. He never takes a vacation from His throne. No situation catches Him off guard, surprises Him, or leaves Him looking for Plan B.

The Scripture tells us that when we ask God for wisdom, He gives to *all*, generously and without reproach... in the very important context of the following verses. This verse (like so many) will be misinterpreted and misapplied if taken out of its context.

A proper understanding of verses 6-8 is crucial if we are going to rightly understand verse 5 and apply it in our lives. Verse 6 says that one must "*ask in faith*".

We established at the beginning of the letter that it is addressed to believers (*brethren*). *Asking in faith* clearly means more than just possessing faith that leads to salvation ("*for you have been saved by grace through faith*", *Ephesians 2:8*).

"*Asking in faith*" certainly does not mean that I believe God will give me whatever I ask for as long as I am sincere. God is no man's debtor. He does not owe us anything. To "name it and claim it" and expect God's compliance with our will is not a Scriptural attitude.

But receiving wisdom from God is tied to our obedient submission to His will. When we live in faith that our all-knowing God loves us, and has a perfect will that is far greater for us than our own, we do not doubt God.

These verses contrast the one who lives in faith with the one who lives in doubt and is likened to a sea wave tossed by the wind. A similar thought is conveyed in *Ephesians 4:14*, speaking of the spiritually immature who are "*tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine*."

The one who doubts God should not expect to receive what he is asking for (v.7). Verse 8 describes him as a "*double-minded man*" (literally translated 'double-souled').

This person is "*unstable*" (v. 8). He is confused (the word used here is also used in *1 Cor. 14:33* which explains that "*God is not the author of confusion*"). This person says he wants to follow God, but then follows after the world and its ways. He is constantly pulled in two opposite directions, unwilling to live in God's will.

As we mature spiritually, we become more stable - transformed by the renewing of our minds, not being conformed to the world (*Rom. 12:2*).

## James 1

### Greeting to the Twelve Tribes

<sup>1</sup> James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered among the nations: Greetings.

### Profiting from Trials

<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you face various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> And let perseverance have *its* perfect result, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, without doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man should not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> *for he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

### The Perspective of Rich and Poor

<sup>9</sup> The brother of humble circumstances should glory in his high position, <sup>10</sup> but the one who is rich should glory in being humbled, because he shall pass away like a wildflower. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its flower falls, and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man also will fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

### Loving God Under Trials

<sup>12</sup> Blessed *is* the man who perseveres despite temptation; because when he has been stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him. <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.

<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own evil desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup> Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. <sup>18</sup> Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the firstfruits among His creatures.

### Qualities Needed in Trials

<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

### Doers—Not Hearers Only

<sup>21</sup> Therefore put aside all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and in humility receive the word planted in you, which is able to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only as those who deceive themselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his face in a mirror, <sup>24</sup> and after seeing himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives liberty, and continues *to do this*, and is not a forgetful hearer but an effective doer - this one will be blessed in what he does.

<sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious [*i.e. if anyone thinks that his outward behavior demonstrates worship of God*], and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* worthless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### Memory Verse for the Week

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 4:7-8 - *Exercise and discipline yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life that is to come.*