FAITH THAT SEEKS WISDOM — PART 2

James 1:5–8, Acts 9:10–19; and 22:12–16

INTRODUCTION: WHEN WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

-Last week, we **continued** our **study** through the book of **James**.

-And we spent **considerable time** examining something that **EVERY believer needs**.

WISDOM

-James has been **writing** to **believers** who were experiencing **trials and difficulties**.

-And in James 1:2–4, he **encouraged** them to **persevere** through those **trials**...

-because the **testing of their faith** produces **spiritual maturity**.

-But then James moves into **verse 5**.

-And we **discovered** something **important**.

-Trials **DON'T** simply require **perseverance**.

-They also require **WISDOM**.

-Because it's one thing to **know** that God wants us to **persevere**.

-It's another thing to know **HOW to respond** when we're **facing difficult circumstances**.

-Let's read James 1:5–8 together.

JAMES 1:5–8 [5] If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. [6] But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. [7] That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. [8] Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

-Now, last week we focused on **verses 5 and 6**.

-And we discovered **two important truths**.

1. Wisdom begins with recognizing our needs.

-James tells us that if we **lack wisdom**, we should **ask God**.

-And I love how he describes the **character of God**.

-He gives **generously**.

-He doesn't **find fault** with us for **acknowledging** our need.

-He **invites us** to come to Him.

2. Wisdom requires trust in God's character.

-Verse 6 tells us to **ask in faith**.

-And we spent some **time discussing** what that **means**.

-James **ISN'T** suggesting that **genuine faith never** experiences **fear**, **uncertainty**, or **questions**.

-In fact, we looked at **two biblical examples**.

-Remember the **father** in **Mark 9**?

-He **brought** his **son** to Jesus and **cried** out:

Mark 9:24 "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

-And then we looked at **King Jehoshaphat** in 2 Chronicles 20.

-He was facing an **overwhelming enemy**.

-He didn't know **how to respond**.

-But **listen** to his **prayer** again.

2 Chronicles 20:12 "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

-I **love** that **prayer**.

-Because sometimes that's **exactly** where we **find ourselves**.

-We **DON'T** know **what** to do.

-We **DON'T** understand **everything** that's **happening**.

-We **DON'T** know how our **circumstances** are **going to turn out**.

-But we can still **trust** the **CHARACTER** of **God**.

-And here's **one** of the **statements** I made last week:

-We **DON'T** have to **know everything** to **trust** the **ONE** who **does**.

-Now, tonight we're going to **examine** something James says that may **challenge** our **understanding** of **faith**.

-Because in **verse 6**, James **describes** someone who **doubts** as being like a **wave of the sea**, blown and tossed by the wind.

-And then in **verses 7 and 8**, he explains the **seriousness of that instability**.

-He introduces a **word** that I want **us** to **understand carefully**.

DOUBLE-MINDED.

-What does it <u>mean</u> to be <u>double-minded</u>?

-Is it the same thing as <u>experiencing fear</u>?

-Is it the same thing as <u>asking God questions</u>?

-And how do we know whether we're genuinely trusting God?

-We're going to **examine** those **questions** tonight.

-But we're also going to **return** to the **story** of **Saul**.

-Remember where we left him?

-He had **encountered** the **risen Jesus** on the **road to Damascus**.

-The man who had **traveled** there **intending** to **arrest Christians**...

-was now **blind**, **waiting** in the **city** for further **instructions**.

-And while Saul was waiting, God was preparing **another man** for an **extraordinary assignment**.

-His name was **Ananias**.

-Ananias knew **Saul's reputation**.

-He knew the **danger** Saul **represented** to the **church**.

-And yet God was about to **send him directly** to the **man** he had **every reason to fear**.

-What happens when "what" God asks us... challenges everything our circumstances seem to be telling us?

-I believe **Ananias's story** will help us **think** through that **question**.

-But **first**, we need to **understand** exactly what **James is teaching** in **verses 7 and 8**.

THE DANGER OF A DIVIDED HEART

-Now, let's **return** to what **James is teaching**.

-Remember, in **verse 5**, James tells us to **ASK GOD** for wisdom.

-And in **verse 6**, he tells us to ask **IN FAITH**, without **wavering**.

-He **compares the person** who **wavers** to a **wave of the sea**, blown and **tossed** by the **wind**.

-But now, in **verses 7 and 8**, James **explains why** this kind of **instability** is so serious.

James 1:7–8 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

-Those are some **STRONG WORDS**.

-And I want to be **careful** that we **DON'T explain** them away.

-Because James is **giving believers** a **serious warning**.

-But we also need to understand **WHO** James is **describing** and **WHY** he uses these **words**.

A. THE WARNING IN JAMES 1:7

-Look at **verse 7**.

"That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord."

-Now, who is **THAT PERSON**?

-We have to go back to **verse 6**.

-It's the **person** James describes as **wavering**.

-It's someone who is **asking God for wisdom**, but whose **trust** is **DIVIDED**.

-And James says that person **SHOULD NOT expect** to receive **anything** from the Lord.

-Notice that James **DOESN'T** say **God** has suddenly become **unwilling to give**.

-We just learned in **verse 5** that God gives **GENEROUSLY**.

-God's **character HASN'T changed** between **verses 5 and 7**.

***-What has **changed** is the **description** of the **PERSON ASKING**.

-In verse 5, James describes the **generosity of God**.

-In verses 6 and 7, he **addresses** the **posture** of the person **seeking** Him.

-And that's an **important distinction**.

-The **problem ISN'T** God's **willingness** to **give**.

-The **problem** is a **heart divided** in its **trust**.

-Now, I want to **clarify** something.

-This verse **DOESN'T** mean that **every time** we **pray** and **DON'T** receive the **answer** we **asked** for...

-We must have **lacked faith**.

-And it **DOESN'T** mean that **God refuses** to hear every prayer **offered** by someone who is **struggling**

-James is **addressing** something more **specific**.

-He's **describing** a **person** who **approaches** God and remains **unsettled** in their **allegiance** to **Him**

-And **verse 8** helps us **understand** that.

B. WHAT DOES DOUBLE-MINDED MEAN? JAMES 1:8

-Look at the first part of **verse 8**.

"Such a person is double-minded..."

-Now, this is where I want us to **slow down**.

-Because the word **DOUBLE-MINDED** is important to **understanding** this entire **passage**.

-The Greek word is ***dipsychos***. ***(di-si-cos or dip-soo-cos)***

-Or as I would like to say it...the **two psychos**.

-It's a **compound word** formed from two Greek elements.

-***Di*** carries the idea of **TWO**.

-And ***psychē*** refers to the **SOUL** or **inner life** of a **person**.

-The word **literally** carries the **idea** of being **TWO-SOULED**.

TWO-SOULED

-James is **describing** someone whose **inner life** is **divided**.

-A person who is **pulled** between **competing commitments**.

-Someone who **wants** to **trust God** but also wants to **maintain** an **allegiance** that **competes** with that **trust**.

-It's **NOT** simply someone who has a **difficult question**.

-It's **NOT** simply someone who **experiences fear**.

-It's someone whose **loyalty** is **DIVIDED**.

-And James **uses** this same **word** again **later** in his **letter**.

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

-**Notice** what James **says** there.

-"**Purify your hearts**, you **double-minded**."

-He's **addressing people** who need to **return** to **UNDIVIDED DEVOTION** to God.

-And that helps us **understand** what he's **describing** here in chapter 1.

-Double-mindedness **ISN'T** merely **having questions** about God.

-It's having a **heart divided** in its **allegiance** to God.

DEEP DIVE

-Now, I want to take just a moment and **connect** this **biblical concept** of being double minded…

-to a **concept** from **psychology**.

-As many of you know, before I **entered** full-time **ministry**, I worked in the **field of psychology**.

-And one of the **approaches** I practiced was **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**.

-There's a **psychological concept** called **COGNITIVE DISSONANCE**.

-The term was **introduced** by psychologist **Leon Festinger** in 1957.

-And it describes the **psychological discomfort** we may **experience…**

-when our **BELIEFS, VALUES, and BEHAVIORS** are inconsistent.

-**Dissonance** is actually a **musical term**.

- It's the combination of **tones that clash** or sound **unstable**,
- **creating tension** and a **feeling** of **urgency**
- that makes the **listener** want a **resolution**.

-Have you ever heard someone play the wrong note or sing off key…?

-Let me give you an **example** of **cognitive dissonance**.

-Suppose someone **believes** that **lying is wrong**.

-They **believe honesty** is **important**.

-But then they **find themselves** in a **situation** where telling the **truth** could have **consequences**.

-So, they **lie**.

-Now there's a **conflict** between what they **BELIEVE** and what they've **DONE**.

-And that **conflict** may **produce discomfort**. (a.k.a. **"conviction"**)

-So, what do people often do?

-They try to **REDUCE the discomfort**. (Just like with **musical dissonance**.)

-They might **admit** they were **wrong** and **change** their **behavior**.

-We would call that **Biblical repentance**…

-**Repentance ISN'T** just **admission** of **guilt**, it's **changing** the **behavior**.

-If **repentance ISN'T chosen**, the person might begin **justifying** their **actions**.

-They might say, ***"Well, it wasn't really a lie."***

-Or, ***"I just didn't want to hurt someone's feelings."***

-And now they're **finding ways** to make their **behavior** seem **consistent** with their **beliefs**.

-So, let me ask these **questions** to you…

-What's more important to you…finding a way to release or conviction/discomfort through repentance?

-Or justifying your behavior, though it may be contrary to the Biblical truth?

-This is where we get **deeper** into the **idea** of being **double minded**…

-Here's the **challenge** to each of you…

-Do you want to stay away from being double-minded? Especially in today's world?

-Then you are going to **need to know** what this **Bible** says…

-And **decide** if you are going to **trust** it or the **world**…

C. THE CONSEQUENCE — INSTABILITY

-Now, look at the remainder of **verse 8**.

Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

-There's another **interesting** Greek word here.

-The word translated **UNSTABLE** is ***akatastatos (a-ka-ta-sta-tos)***

-It **describes** something that is **unsettled, erratic, unpredictable** or **disorderly**.

-And **notice** that **James** says this **person** is **UNSTABLE IN <u>ALL THEY DO</u>**.

-James is telling us that a person with a **divided heart** experiences **INSTABILITY**.

-Like the **waves tossing** you around, **back** and **forth (James 1:6)**!

-A person with a **divided heart** or **double minded** has **<u>COMPETING LOYALTIES</u>**.

-One **moment**, a person may be **looking toward God**.

-And the **next moment**, they're **allowing** another **allegiance** to **direct** their **decisions**.

-Their direction **keeps changing** because their **devotion** is **divided**.

-Now let me be **careful** here...

-This **DOESN'T** mean a **faithful Christian** will **NEVER** struggle with **uncertainty**.

-And it **DOESN'T** mean **spiritual maturity eliminates** every **difficult emotion**.

-But it **DOES** mean that where we **<u>PLACE OUR TRUST</u> matters**.

-Especially when we're **facing trials**.

***-Because **trials** have a **way** of **<u>REVEALING</u>** what we're **<u>RELYING</u> upon**.

ALLEGIANCE

-I want to give you some **examples** of **double-mindedness** in our everyday **lives**..

1. THE ALLEGIANCE TO SELF-PRESERVATION

The "Plan B" Mindset

-Now, there's **NOTHING wrong** with being **prepared**.

-And there's **NOTHING wrong** with having a **backup plan**.

-But there is **SOMETHING wrong** when our **desire** to **PROTECT ourselves**

-becomes **MORE important** than **TRUSTING God**.

-We might pray, ***"Lord, I trust You to provide for me."***

-But when things **DON'T** happen as **quickly** as we'd like...

-we begin trying to **force** things to **happen**.

-Maybe we start **manipulating** a **situation**.

-Maybe we begin **cutting corners**.

-Or maybe we start **compromising** something we **know is right**…

-because we're **afraid** of what **MIGHT** happen if we **DON'T**.

-Now, here's the **problem**…It's so easy to say we're **trusting God**…

-but in **reality**, we're only **trusting Him** as long as things are **going our way**.

-And when they **DON'T**, we take **matters** into our **own hands.**

-And I think that's where we need to **examine our hearts**.

-Because there's a difference between **making wise plans** and **refusing to trust God**.

-Let me **give you a passage** that I think **speaks directly** to this issue.

Proverbs 3:5–8 [5] Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [6] in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. [7] Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. [8] This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

-Notice what **Solomon** tells us.

-**Trust** in the Lord with **ALL** your **heart**.

-Not **part** of your **heart**.

-Not just **when** things are **going well**.

-But with **all your heart**.

-And then he says, **"Lean not on your own understanding."**

-Now, that **DOESN'T** mean we **stop thinking**, **planning**, or making **responsible decisions**.

-It means our understanding **CAN'T** become **more important** than our **trust in God**.

-And notice **verse 7**: **"*Do not be wise in your own eyes.*"**

-I think that's where **self-preservation** can become **dangerous**.

-We **begin believing** that **we know better**.

-And when **trusting God requires** something **uncomfortable**, we start **looking** for **another way**.

-Trusting God also **comes** with a **promise** in **verse 8**.

This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

-The question **ISN'T** whether I have a **backup plan**.

-The question is whether I'm **willing to disobey** God to **protect MY plan**.

-Am I asking God for wisdom because I genuinely <u>want to follow Him</u>?

-Or am I asking Him to <u>bless</u> what I've <u>already decided</u> I'm going to <u>do</u>?

-Here's another example of **double-mindedness** that I think we can all relate to.

2. THE ALLEGIANCE TO CULTURAL VALIDATION

The Approval Seekers

-In other words, we **want people** to **like us**.

-We want to be **accepted**.

-We want people to **approve of us**.

-And there's **nothing wrong** with **wanting** to have **good relationships** with people.

-But here's where it **becomes** a **problem**.

-***What happens when our <u>desire to be accepted</u> becomes more <u>important</u> than our <u>commitment to Christ?</u>***

-Let me give you an **example**.

-We might have strong **biblical convictions** about something.

-And when we're around other **Christians**, we're perfectly **comfortable** expressing those **convictions**.

-But then we find ourselves in a **different environment**.

-Maybe it's at **work**.

-Maybe it's with a **group** of **friends**.

-Or maybe it's in a **conversation** where we know our **biblical convictions WON'T** be popular.

-And suddenly, we're **NOT quite as confident** about what we **believe**.

-We begin **softening our convictions**.

-We might even find ourselves **agreeing with something** we know **contradicts Scripture**.

-Why? Because we **DON'T** want to be **rejected**.

-We **DON'T** want to be **criticized**.

-And we certainly **DON'T** want to **lose** our **reputation**.

-Now, listen to what **Paul** says in **Galatians**.

Galatians 1:8-10 [8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! [9] As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be

under God's curse! [10] Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

-Now, remember the context.

-Paul is **defending** the **gospel of Jesus Christ** against those who were **distorting** it.

-And he **makes** something very **clear**.

-The **approval** of **people** CAN'T become **more important** than our **allegiance** to **Christ**.

-And I think that's where this **connects to James**.

-Remember the picture of the waves in James 1:6?

-They're being **blown** and **tossed** by the **wind**.

-Now, think about **someone** whose **convictions change depending** on the **people** they're **around**.

-When they're **around believers**, they want to **honor God**.

-But when they're **around people** who **oppose** their **convictions**, they want to **fit in**.

-And their **behavior** begins to **shift** depending on which way the **wind is blowing**.

-Being **faithful** to Christ **DOESN'T** mean we have to be **argumentative**, **harsh**, or **confrontational**.

-We can **disagree** with **people** and still demonstrate **love, kindness, and respect**.

-But we **CAN'T** allow our **desire** for **acceptance** to determine what we **believe** or how we **obey God**.

-The issue **ISN'T** whether **people approve** of us.

The issue is whether we **need their approval MORE** than we **desire** to **please God**.

-And here's a **question worth asking** ourselves.

-Are my convictions <u>rooted</u> in God's Word, or are they determined by the <u>people</u> I'm trying to impress?

-Here's a third example of **double-mindedness**.

3. THE ALLEGIANCE TO FINANCIAL SECURITY

The Grip of Money

-Now, here's the **last allegiance** that I think can **hit pretty close to home**.

-**Financial security.**

-We all want to **pay our bills**, **provide** for our **families**, and have something **set aside** for the **future**.

-And there's absolutely **nothing wrong** with that.

-But here's the **question**.

-What happens when our <u>financial security</u> becomes more <u>important</u> than our <u>trust in God</u>?

-We might say, ***"God is my provider."***

-But when the **bank account looks good**, we feel **secure**.

-And when the numbers **start getting smaller**, we begin to **worry**.

-Suddenly, our **confidence** in God's **provision** is **determined** by our **financial circumstances**.

-Now, I want you to look at something Solomon says.

PROVERBS 3:9–10 [9] ***"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;*** [10] ***then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."***

-Notice that **Solomon** says to **honor God** with our **wealth**.

-And then he **uses** the word **firstfruits**.

-In an **agricultural society**, the **firstfruits** were the **first portion** of the **harvest**.

-**NOT** the **leftovers**.

-**NOT whatever remained** after everything else was **taken care of**.

-But the **FIRST portion**.

-And **giving** that **first portion** was an **acknowledgment** that **God was their provider**.

-Now, let me **ask** you something.

-Does <u>your giving</u> reflect your <u>trust</u> in God?

-We say we **believe** God **provides** for us.

-But are we willing to <u>honor Him first</u> with our finances?

-Do you <u>regularly give</u> to your <u>local church</u>?

-And if not, <u>what's keeping you</u> from <u>doing</u> so?

-Now, I **understand** that people have **financial responsibilities**.

-And some people are **facing genuinely DIFFICULT circumstances**.

-But I also **believe giving** is an **important part** of our **spiritual obedience**.

-And notice the **promise** pictured in **verse 10**.

-Solomon describes **God's abundant provision**.

-That **DOESN'T** mean **giving guarantees** we'll become **wealthy**.

-But it **DOES remind** us that **God is worthy of our trust**.

-And here's where this **connects to James**.

-We can **say** we **trust God** while allowing our **desire for financial security** to **determine** our **obedience**.

-We want **God** to be our **provider**, but we also want to **maintain complete control** of our **money**.

-And when our **desire** to **protect our money** becomes **more important** than our willingness to **obey God**...

-**"Houston, we have a problem."**

-Because **money** is **NO longer** something we **manage**.

-It's becoming something we **serve**.

-The **issue ISN'T** how **much money** we **possess.**

-The **issue IS** how much **influence money** has **over** our **hearts.**

-So, here's the **question** I want you to **consider**.

-Am I trusting God as my provider, and does my giving demonstrate that trust?

D. BRINGING IT BACK TO ANANIAS

-Now, remember the **story** we began **last week**.

-**Saul** has **encountered Jesus** on the road to **Damascus**.

-He's **sitting** in **Damascus**, **unable** to **see**.

-And God is **preparing** to **send** a **disciple** named **Ananias** to him.

-But here's what I want us to **understand** before we **return** to that story.

-I **DON'T** believe Ananias was **double-minded** because he had **concerns** about **Saul**.

-He had **good reasons** to be **afraid**.

-He **knew** what **Saul** had **done** to **Christians**.

-And when **God instructed him to go**, Ananias **expressed** those **concerns**.

-But here's the **questions** we need to **consider**.

-What would Ananias do when God's instruction challenged what he knew about Saul?

-Would he allow his fear to determine his response?

-Or would he trust the Lord who was speaking to him?

-And that's where I want us to **pick up the story**.

WHEN FEAR MEETS FAITH

Acts 9:10–16 [10] In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. [11] The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. [12] In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." [13] "Lord,"

Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. [14] And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." [15] But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. [16] I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

A. AN ORDINARY DISCIPLE

-Notice what **verse 10** says.

"In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias."

-Luke **DOESN'T introduce** him as an **apostle**.

-He **DOESN'T identify** him as a **famous preacher**.

-He simply **calls** him a **disciple**.

-A **follower** of **Jesus**.

-And yet God was about to **involve** this **ordinary disciple** in something **extraordinary**.

-Now, notice what **happens**.

-The **Lord speaks** to Ananias in a **vision**.

-And Ananias responds: ***"Yes, Lord."***

-Then the **Lord tells** him to go to the **house of Judas** on **Straight Street** (Gave him the address)

-and **ask** for a man named **Saul of Tarsus**.

-And God explains that **Saul is praying** and has seen a **vision of a man named Ananias**

-I think I'd be like, ***"God, you gave him my name?"***

-God is **working** in **two** different **people's lives**.

-Saul is **praying**.

-Ananias is **receiving instructions**.

-And God is **preparing** to **bring** their **lives together**.

-But there's a **problem**.

-Ananias **knows** who **Saul** is.

B. ANANIAS HAS LEGITIMATE CONCERNS

-Now, I want you to **pay att**ention to Ananias's **response**.

"Lord, I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem."

-And then he **reminds the Lord** that Saul has **authority** to **arrest** believers in Damascus.

-Now, I have to **smile** a little when I **read** this.

-Because Ananias is **telling the Lord** something the **Lord already knows**!

-But think about what he's saying.

- ***Lord, do You know who this man is?***
- ***Do You know what he's done?***
- ***Do You know why he's here?***

-Of **course**, God **knows**.

-But Ananias has some very **legitimate concerns**.

-Saul **approved** of **Stephen's execution**.

-He **dragged believers** from their **homes**.

-He was **determined** to **destroy** the **church**.

-And now **God** is **telling** Ananias to **go find him**.

-Can you imagine what must have been going through Ananias's mind?

-Now, Scripture **DOESN'T** specifically **tell us everything** Ananias was **feeling**.

-But it certainly **gives us enough information** to understand why he was **concerned**.

-And here's where I want to **connect this story** to **James**.

-Having **legitimate concerns DOESN'T** make someone **double-minded**.

-Ananias is **NOT** necessarily **demonstrating** a **divided allegiance**.

-He's **expressing** what he **knows** about **Saul**.

-The Lord **DOESN'T rebuke** Ananias for **raising** those **concerns**.

-He **responds** by **explaining** what He **intends** to **DO** through **Saul**.

C. GOD SEES WHAT ANANIAS CANNOT SEE

-Now, look at the **Lord's response**.

"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."

-Ananias knows **Saul's past**.

-But God **reveals** something about **Saul's future**.

-Ananias knows Saul as a **PERSECUTOR**.

-But **God has chosen** Saul to become a **PROCLAIMER of the gospel**.

-Ananias knows what Saul has done **AGAINST the church**.

-But God knows what Saul will do **for the SAKE of Christ**.

-Ananias **knew** what **Saul had done**.

-But only God **knew** what **Saul would become.**

-Now, notice something important.

-God **DOESN'T** tell Ananias that **Saul's past** was **harmless**.

-He **DOESN'T pretend** the **persecution NEVER happened**.

-And He **DOESN'T promise** that **following Jesus** will be **easy** for Saul.

-In fact, verse 16 says: ***"I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."***

-But God had a **purpose** for **Saul's life** that Ananias could **NOT** have **anticipated**.

-And this is where I want us to think about what we've learned from James.

D. TRUSTING GOD WHEN WE DON'T SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE

-Remember what **James told us** in verse 5.

-When we **lack wisdom**, we should **ask God**.

-And in **verse 6,** he tells us to **ask in faith**.

-Then in **verses 7 and 8**, he **warns** against a **divided heart**.

-Now, Ananias **gives us a picture** of someone **facing** a **difficult situation**.

-He knows the **danger**, has **questions**, and **legit concerns**.

-But he's also **receiving direction** from the Lord.

-And here's the **question**.

-Will Ananias allow <u>Saul's reputation</u> to become more <u>authoritative</u> than the <u>Lord's instruction</u>?

-Ananias received a **specific instruction** from **Jesus** in a **vision**.

-And James **DOESN'T promise** that every time we **ask for wisdom**, God will give us that **same experience**.

-But the **principle of trusting** God's **character** remains **important**.

-Because sometimes **obedience requires** us to **move forward** without **understanding** everything.

-And sometimes our **circumstances** give us **plenty of reasons** to be **afraid**.

-**Faith** is **NOT** always the **absence of fear**.

-Sometimes **faith is demonstrated** by **obedience** in the **presence of fear**.

-And that's what makes **Ananias's story** so **meaningful** to me.

-God was **inviting** him to **participate** in something much **bigger** than he **understood**.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

-We **began** tonight by **talking** about **double-mindedness**.

-We **talked** about **competing allegiances**.

- Our desire to **protect** ourselves.
- Our desire to **gain the approval** of others.
- And our desire for **financial security**.

-And we **discovered** these things can **become more important** to us than our **allegiance** to God.

-So here's my **final questions** for you tonight.

-What is competing with your allegiance to God?

- ***Is it your desire to remain in control?***
- ***Is it your need for the approval of others?***
- ***Is it your desire for financial security?***
- ***Or is there something else that makes trusting God difficult?***

-Remember what James has been teaching us.

-Wisdom begins with recognizing our need.

-Wisdom requires trust in God's character.

-And a divided heart produces an unstable life.

-We **DON'T** have to **understand everything** God is **doing**.

-But we are **called** to **trust** Him.

-And **next week**, we'll see what happens when **Ananias walks** into the **house** where **Saul is waiting**.