

James 1:1-8

- (1) James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.
- (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
- (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
- (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- (5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
- (6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
- (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
- (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James was one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Most Jewish Christians were scattered because of persecution. So James is writing to his extended congregation as they fled in all different directions. The first thing he addresses with them is the suffering they are going through.

James 1:2

- (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

I want to take time and look at each word in this verse because there is so much to really process here.

Count

ἡγέομαι

2. to engage in an intellectual process, *think, consider, regard*

All

πᾶς,

3. marker of the highest degree of someth., *all*

Meet

περιπίπτω

2. to encounter at hazard, *fall in with, fall into*

Trials

πειρασμός,

1. an attempt to learn the nature or character of someth., *test, trial*

various

ποικίλος

2. pert. to existence in various aspects
a. of things, many-colored, *variegated*

So here is the verse paraphrased and expounded.

Take time to rationally think through and consider with care the fact that you should have pure untainted joy when you fall into a trial of suffering that you didn't see coming and came out of nowhere, it is actually going to be used to refine you and show the true character, and value of your faith, and these trials can come in any way shape and size.

When James says to count it all Joy, this has nothing to do with emotions, he says consider and reckon, think, decide in your mind to value the eternal and the permanent heavenly things instead of the earthly suffering, focus on God.

He wants to encourage them that this suffering is accomplishing so much more in heaven than they can even comprehend.

There is so much more we can say here but I want to move on to get our main passage down in verse 5.

James 1:2

- (2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
- (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
- (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, **that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

This verse can come across as minimizing suffering. But what it really is doing is that it is encouraging us as believers to view things with an eternal mindsight and see things and value things through God's point of view.

He finished this section with the promise that if we mature and grow through the suffering by learning steadfastness we will mature and lack in nothing.

James is trying to teach us that suffering has value. We are refined and mature through it. Even Jesus grew and matured through what He suffered.

Hebrews 5:8-9

- (8) Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.**
- (9) **And being made perfect,** he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

If Christ had things to learn through suffering, then we absolutely do.

Then almost to predict the questions this might bring up, what do you mean "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing?" James is going to let us know what we are supposed to do if we are not perfect yet.

James 1:5

(5) If any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask God**, who gives **generously to all without reproach**, and it will be given him.

So if we have not yet been refined by suffering, the answer is we need Wisdom.

But Notice who we are told to go to if we lack Wisdom...

- Your Pastor
- Your friends
- Your parents
- Just Stop and Think
- Be true to yourself

NO! We are told to go to God, start there with Him. Go to Him for Wisdom first. **How often do we talk about something, ask for poples opinion on what to do, even asked for prayer about something and deep down we know we have not actually gone to God first and asked for wisdom about a situation.**

We are told our first conversation should be with God, seeking Godly counsel from those who have Wisdom around us can be helpful but we cannot make that our first stop. Our first stop must be God. The true Godly wisdom that we are told to seek only comes from Him. (Godly people around us might have wisdom but if it is true Godly wisdom then it came from HIM)

Later in his book James is going to make sure we understand that there are two types of Wisdom.

James 3:13-17

(13) Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

(14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

(15) **This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.**

(16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

(17) **But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.**

There are two kinds of Wisdom, earthly and Heavenly. Earthly wisdom follows after the world way of thinking and at its core is demonic and sinful. Verse 16 describes the outcome of earthly wisdom.

It leads to chaos and sin. Stop and think for a second. Often we talk about how foolish the world is. But Notice what James calls the Worlds way of thinking. He describes it as wisdom.

If this wasn't a type of wisdom he would have said, this is not wisdom. But instead he gives a qualifier this is not the wisdom form above.

The reason I am pointing this out is I fear that all too often what we think of as wisdom, is actually just earthly wisdom. That was really wise. Well, which type.

I want to take a moment and talk about what true Godly wisdom is. Godly Wisdom is the Wisdom that we are asking for back in chapter 1, Godly wisdom is what we desperately need.

Scripture has so much to say about it, so we are just going to start building a list of what describes wisdom.

Psalms 111:10

(10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Godly Wisdom sees God for who He is, and in turn sees everything else in a correct perspective, fear of God helps our entire focus come into alignment.

Psalms 90:10-12

(10) The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

(11) Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

(12) So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

A wise heart understands that our time on this earth is short, we must learn (taught by God) to number our days and realize that each day is a unique day to glorify God that we will never get back time is so precious.

Proverbs 12:15

(15) The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, **but a wise man listens to advice.**

Able to hear advice and does not think their own way is always correct. This also means that our natural bent, what comes naturally to us is the way of the fool.

Proverbs 11:2

(2) When pride comes, then comes disgrace, **but with the humble is wisdom.**

A Wise person is humble (does not rely on themselves)
Doesn't rely on their own wisdom

Proverbs 29:11

(11) A fool gives full vent to his spirit, **but a wise man quietly holds it back.**

If this verse was put in practice by more people I think it would dramatically reduce the amount of posting on social media. There is great wisdom in holding back, it is not our job to change the world and change the minds of everyone who disagrees with us. Practice wisdom.

Proverbs 10:23

(23) Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, **but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.**

A Wise man understands that sin and doing wrong is not something to be taken as a joke or to be taken lightly but is serious.

Proverbs 17:10

(10) **A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding** than a hundred blows into a fool.

Godly wisdom understands the need to be corrected, hears it and grows from it. When we are confronted with our sin, there is a natural defensive response. Sometimes we even start to accuse the person coming to us of wrong. But notice what the Godly response is, a wise man is willing to hear the correction and change because their goal is to grow in Christ. Notice a fool takes a hundred blows and still doesn't get it.

Proverbs 13:20

(20) **Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise**, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

A wise person surrounds themselves with wise people. Who you are around will rub off on you, guaranteed. Do not surround yourself with fools!

Proverbs 26:4-5

(4) Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

(5) Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Well, which is it? Both, Godly Wisdom helps us understand scripture and know when and how to apply passages. I love that these two verses are back to back. There are times as I have already said it is wise to hold back, and then there are times to present the truth. We must use Godly wisdom to know the difference.

There are so many other verses but we will stop there, because we need to understand how to receive wisdom.

James 1:5

(5) If any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask God**, who gives **generously to all without reproach**, and it will be given him.

It is a simple command. Ask God. Go to God and ask Him for Wisdom.

Then I love these qualifiers that describe how God will respond.

Generously

ἀπλῶς 1. pert. to being straightforward, simply, above board, sincerely, openly

Without Reproach

ὀνειδίζω

1. to find fault in a way that demeans the other, reproach, revile, mock, heap insults upon as a way of shaming;

Have you ever had to ask someone for help when it is going to be a “I told you so” moment? Where you know they are the one who can help but it is going to come with a lecture and with condemnation and mockery... That is not God

Story of putting up the steel angle Iron.

There is no I told you so with God, there is no lecture, or why didn't you come to me sooner? We have a loving Father, who runs out to meet us while we are still a far way off. We have a God who is thrilled we are coming to Him.

God gives wisdom simply and without reproach

James 1:5

(5) If any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask God**, who gives **generously to all without reproach**, and it will be given him.

“and it will be given him.”

Notice the promise at the end of the verse, it will be given, when we ask God for Wisdom He gives it!

But the next verse has a very important qualifier for this promise to work

James 1:6-8

- (6) **But let him ask in faith, with no doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
 (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
 (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

We have to ask for wisdom in faith. This is the key are we asking in faith? But the real meaning of this verse is lost if we make it about us. **This verse is not about my ability to have faith it is a verse about a God who is worthy to be trusted.**

Hebrews 10:23

- (23) **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.**

God is faithful; I don't trust my ability to trust

I trust Him. He is Faithful

When James says to ask in faith with no doubting, He is commanding us have a confidence in who God is and the promises He has given to you. He promises to give wisdom simply and without reproach we must trust him to do it.

This kind of trust is an attitude we can see over and over again in the OT

The first example is with David as a Shepard going out to meet Goliath.

David

1 Samuel 17:26

- (26) And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? **For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?**"

David heard Goliath's taunts and is outraged the Israeli army would let a gentile insult the one and true living God that way.

1 Samuel 17:36-37

- (36) Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, **and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.**
 (37) And David said, "**The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.**" And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

David's confidence is in God. He knew that God would not stand to be mocked by Goliath. He trusted in God's character to know that God wanted Goliath dealt with.

David had no trust in his abilities but in who His God was.

The second example is with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego at the Fiery furnace.

Fiery furnace

Daniel 3:16-18

(16) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

(17) If this be so, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.**

(18) **But if not**, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

They had an unshaking confidence in who their God was. And it was based on truth we can be confident in something doesn't make it real.

We should have an unshaking confidence in the promises God has given us! We should feel freedom to pray what's on our hearts and what our desires are but our confidence must rest in who God is and what He has promised.

Notice that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not say they knew for certain that they would be delivered from the fiery furnace. They said our God is able, but we don't know if it is in His will or not, but they had a confidence that either way God will deliver them.

To be able to have this kind of confidence in God and in His promises you have to know His truth! I hear people all the time I don't believe God would... there is one sure fire way to know what God wants, look to His Word He revealed to us.
Don't take promises that are not ours...
Don't take promises out of context...

And yet we are also told in James that it is possible for us to doubt God.

James 1:6-8

- (6) But let him ask in faith, with no **doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
 (7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
 (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Notice how the person who doubts God is described, being tossed around in the sea, not controlling their own direction but getting pushed around, unstable. In verse 8, double minded literally in the Greek means two souled. This person doesn't know which way to go.

Also think this is not a person who doesn't care what God thinks. This is a person who asks for Wisdom asks for God's direction and yet in the back of their mind they doubt if God can actually deal with the situation.

We can see this attitude in Moses when the people wanted meat.

Israel was tired of the perfect food Manna, and so they grumble and complain, we see God's response to their complaints in Numbers 11

Numbers 11:19-23

- (19) You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days,
 (20) but a whole month, **until it comes out at your nostrils** and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we come out of Egypt?"
 (21) **But Moses said, "The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!'"**
 (22) Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?"
 (23) And the LORD said to Moses, **"Is the LORD's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not."**

Has Moses forgotten who God is?

Notice what he was focused on though in verse 21. Everything he mentions is earthly. No reliance on God's promises or a confidence in Him. **Think about what Moses did just that Morning, he went outside to collect Manna**, that literally rained from the sky but now God is big enough to provide meat. How often do we do this very thing, God is big enough to provide bread but not meat.

Think about how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have answered the people. If God wants to provide meat He can, He already daily provides the manna that we should be content with.

James 1:6-8

- (6) But let him ask in faith, with no **doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
- (7) For that person **must not suppose** that he will receive anything from the Lord;
- (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Verse 7 says that this unstable man must not suppose he will receive anything from God, the word for suppose can also mean expect. When we don't have a trust in God we really don't even expect that God will answer our prayer. Moses didn't expect God to be able to provide Meat.

This is not about God measuring our faith, like there is a magical amount needed to get wisdom; this is about a confidence in who our God is. Remember the promise we were already given, God gives generously and without reproach. When I doubt I really doubt even expect to receive the wisdom from God.

God knows who we are better than we know ourselves.

Psalms 103:14

- (14) For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

I forget that I am dust but He doesn't. He wants us to trust Him! This confidence should change our prayers, and how we make decisions. Have a confidence that God is big enough to give you, even though you are dust (He knows that) His Godly wisdom. He is big enough to guide us.

Proverbs 3:21-26

- (21) **My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion,**
- (22) **and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.**
- (23) Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.
- (24) If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
- (25) Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes,
- (26) **for the LORD will be your confidence** and will keep your foot from being caught.