

James 1:5-8

⁵ *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.*

⁶ *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.*

⁷ *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

To ask God for something is to go before Him in prayer. What James is essentially saying is, if you lack wisdom, pray to God for wisdom. In that it says God gives to all men *liberally*, this is to say that God gives everything man needs for him to be made spiritually complete. Remember this is in the context of patience having her perfect work, that they might be perfect and entire. Wisdom will be necessary for them to be perfected.

As we learn from Paul's doctrine, man's flesh is unable to produce anything pleasing to God. God therefore must provide what man needs on a spiritual basis—no one can provide it for themselves. The Hebrew remnant are no different; God, through the word and the Holy Ghost, have, as Peter says in 2 Peter 1, *given unto (them) all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him.*

In that it says *upbraideth not*, all it is saying is that God is not going to scold or criticize the audience here for asking. As we see, there is a requirement for receiving this wisdom however, and that is *faith*. As we saw in our last lesson, it is in fact a work of faith they are engaged in.

A historical example of God answering a prayer specifically for wisdom is Solomon:

1 Kings 3:5-12

⁵ *In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.*

⁶ *And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and*

thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

⁷ And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

⁸ And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

⁹ Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

¹⁰ And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

¹¹ And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

¹² Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

Solomon was given wisdom because he prayed *according to God's will*, that he would be able to rule the nation of Israel righteously. God previously told David that he would have a son, and that his son would establish God's house, and that David's throne would not depart from that son. Thus, Solomon, finding himself the heir of the throne, prayed according to God's will that he would be able to properly judge the nation of Israel.

Praying according to God's will gives confidence. If you waver, maybe you lack confidence because you're asking for something God never said He would do, or perhaps you're asking for something in God's word, but don't have a correct understanding of it. Perhaps God is not even doing that today.

James instructs them to ask, but without wavering, that is, to ask in absolute faith. This means to ask *according to His word*. His word is His *revealed will* and the object of our faith. Biblical faith is *always* tied to His word.

Consider 1 John 5:

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

¹⁵ *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Confidence in prayer comes from an understanding of God's word and therefore His will. In this way we become grounded, rather than as a wave of the sea, tossed by the wind. This imagery of being carried about by the wind in James 1:6 is the same imagery Paul uses in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:14

...That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive...

To *waver* means you are not doctrinally sound. As a wave of the sea wave-ers, that is, in its uncertainty and indecision gives heed to the circumstances about it, such as the position of the moon and the wind, it has no sure footing or will of its own, but is subject to external influence.

We must not be conformed to this world, or the circumstances of this world and its influences: saints must be grounded in truth, and doctrinally sound. To be *doctrinally sound* means you have an understanding of the doctrine contained in the word. If you are not grounded in the doctrine, you will not have confidence in prayer.

James is talking about *the proper application of doctrine* when he speaks about *wisdom*. The way this is sometimes taught is that if you have a life decision that you're not sure about, just pray and maybe God will *tell you* what to do. What is typically expected is a response from God in the form of thoughts or ideas, feelings, dreams, or signs in external circumstances.

When people pray like this, what they are essentially saying is, "*God, just tell me what to do.*" They want to *bypass* the doctrine, *bypass* the principles you get from the doctrine, *bypass the growth*, and just have the answer. That is not correct in the context of James, nor for the dispensation of grace in which we live; we are supposed to be taught and edified by the doctrine so that we are able to *exercise liberty*. If we wanted God to tell us what to do we would just put ourselves back under the Law, because that's *exactly* what the Old Testament Law was.

Now, for both us and the Hebrew remnant, the doctrine *will* inform us and give us proper wisdom so that we *can* make judgments that pertain to everyday life, but God is not going to supernaturally download instructions into our minds and tell us what to do.

The word is how the Father teaches:

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴ *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

⁴⁵ *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

Notice how verse 45 says that those that *hear* are those that are taught by the Father, and that is how they are drawn to Christ. It is not some mystical force that violates their free will as in the Calvinist system of theology. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Those who *hear* are those whom the Father draws. This is why Jesus tells the disciples in Luke 8:18, *Take heed therefore how ye hear.*

An example of the doctrine informing the remnant on a real life, practical issue is leaving Jerusalem when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple. At that point, wisdom says to leave. We must understand that many will be leaving families—mothers, fathers, sons, daughters—and friends, who they have been trying to witness to, who they've been trying to persuade that Jesus is the Christ. But at that time there will be no more point in trying to persuade them, because God Himself is going to send a delusion upon them that they might be damned. How difficult it would be to leave behind those you love to be damned. The doctrine will have to be at work in these believers for them to be able to do what wisdom says. It is not going to be easy to leave behind homes—families, shelter, food and clothing—and take up refuge in the wilderness.

Look what Jesus tells them in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:15-25

¹⁵ *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)*

¹⁶ *Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*

¹⁷ *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:*

¹⁸ *Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

¹⁹ *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*

²⁰ *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:*

²¹ *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

²² *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

²³ *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*

²⁴ *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

²⁵ *Behold, I have told you before.*

This is why the writer of Hebrews says this:

Hebrews 13:12-14

¹² *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

¹³ *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

¹⁴ *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

The audience of the Hebrew epistles have clear and specific doctrine and instructions, and they are going to need a correct understanding, perspective, and attitude toward these things if they are to overcome.

It is interesting that James instructs them to ask God for wisdom, and then proceeds, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to elucidate what that wisdom looks like in an epistle. As we have said, James *is* a book of wisdom, that is, the proper use and application of knowledge, which will help them develop *temperance* and *patience*.

If they are having to *ask* for wisdom, this means *they do not yet have it*. The wisdom this is speaking of is the *practical wisdom* they receive by *applying their doctrine by faith*. Wisdom entails *intentional action* or *inaction*. The temperance and patience that they will develop *is* that wisdom, and is going to allow them to endure any sufferings they encounter during the time of God's chastisement, and ultimately become the sons of God the prophets said they would.

Consider the following:

Hebrews 12:4-11

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Hosea 1:9-10

9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

We see that God was to cast off Israel as His people, but that through a process of chastisement, He is going to exercise them unto righteousness and holiness and produce a new nation, one entirely comprised of sons of God, through which He will fulfill all His promises to their fathers. This is going to require wisdom and patient endurance.

However, the remnant was also promised supernatural wisdom:

Luke 12:11-12

¹¹ *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:*

¹² *For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*

Luke 21:12-15

¹² *But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.*

¹³ *And it shall turn to you for a testimony.*

¹⁴ *Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:*

¹⁵ *For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

We see an example of this wisdom in Acts 6:

Acts 6:8-10

⁸ *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

⁹ *Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.*

¹⁰ *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.*

In all of these examples, it appears this supernatural wisdom is specifically for the purpose of a testimony to unbelievers, governmental rulers, and religious authorities. We must understand that these believers are living in the last days, where there are going to be many supernatural events occurring. Even the beast and false prophet will be performing great miracles to seduce men into following them:

Mark 13:22

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Revelation 16:13-14

¹³ *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The remnant must preach the gospel of the kingdom as a witness to all nations in the seventieth week, hence the supernatural wisdom and signs that will follow them and help them to accomplish this purpose (Matt. 24:14, Mark 16:17-18).

Matthew 24:3, 14

³ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Mark 16:15-18

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Though the remnant are promised supernatural wisdom and signs, they also must receive the word of God if they want to be perfected in the wisdom necessary for their edification, that is, the work of faith we discussed in the last lesson. We saw the audience of James is instructed to pray for wisdom, implying that they in some way lack it. That is because the wisdom they are praying for pertains to their own personal edification process.

God's wisdom is something we should all desire, but is not something that is "supernaturally" given today in the way it will be given in the seventieth week. Even the remnant will not always have wisdom imparted to them in this way, as we have seen; why would they need to pray for wisdom at all if they automatically had it? Of course all spiritual wisdom from God is, in a sense, "supernatural," but what will be happening in the time of Jacob's trouble will be unique.

James 1:5-8

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A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. To be double minded is to have a mind towards two different things, to be influenced and pulled in two different directions. The epistle of James is going to take up the issue of commerce itself, and address the rich and the poor. Part of the wisdom they must develop is to understand that, while they may have to give up everything for the moment, what they are going to receive in the kingdom is far greater. This is the mind they must have. Look at what Jesus says to them in the sermon on the mount:

Matthew 6:19-24

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus is specifically addressing here the issue of having a *singleness of eye*, a *singleness of mind*, toward the will of God and its reward, as opposed to the goods and riches of the world system. It is of course perfectly fitting that James is going to address this issue, for the context is one of socioeconomic conflict for believers. We understand that at this time, to be a part of

the world's economic system is to be involved in the ultimate form of idolatry, as only those who acquiesce to the antichrist will be able to participate in normal commerce.

Revelation 13:16-17

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

This gives context to the warning in Hebrews 12:

Hebrews 12:15-17

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

In that Christ says the light of the body is the eye, and the eye must be single if they are to be full of light, this should call to mind Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:14-16

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

If their eye is single and set solely upon God's will, their whole body will be full of light, and that light is to be put on display among men. Here in Matthew 5 they are likened to a candlestick, and that is exactly how Jesus describes the kingdom church in Revelation 1:

Revelation 1:12-13, 20

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle...

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.