

## Trials and Wisdom

**James 1:2-4** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **3 Things that James Isn't Saying—**

- (1) God has forsaken you;
- (2) God is failing you;
- (3) God will not make it better;

### **3 Things that James Is Saying—**

- (1) Trials are coming;

- Trials are inevitable for the Christian; they're coming and we shouldn't be surprised when we face them; in fact, when trials come, we should receive them so that our faith would be refined;

- *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." (1 Peter 4:12)*

- (2) Trials are a test;

- As a test, trials are an opportunity not an obstacle; trials will help us grow to be (1) mature and (2) steadfast;

- *"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5)*

- To be steadfast ("*remain under*") means to grow in perseverance over the length of time (like an individual carrying a heavy load over a long time;

- Many of you lack maturity because you're not steadfast; standing firm

- (3) Count it all joy;

- Despite the trial you find yourself in, you can find joy;

- Often time, we say "joy" to mean "happy"

- Being happy is circumstantial; joy is found, not in our circumstance, but in Jesus, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

- *"...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)*

- Testing, for the believer, is not a question of whether you have faith or not, rather it's purifying (refining) the faith that you already have;

- The result of maturity and steadfastness is spiritual maturity and integrity; godliness;

- *"...rather train yourself for godliness." (1 Timothy 4:7)*

- It's, through trials, coming out on the other side more like Jesus;

- The question is not "how can God change my situation?" but "how can God change me?"

**James 1:5-8** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 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. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge:

(1) *Knowledge is acquiring truth;*

(2) *Wisdom is knowing what to do with truth;*

- *"Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is not fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom." (Charles Spurgeon)*

- You can have knowledge and no wisdom, but you cannot have wisdom and no knowledge;

- James says to ask God for wisdom "in faith with no doubting"—

(1) This does not mean that we do not have moments where we encounter doubt or lapse in faith;

(2) This does mean, however, that we understand God as a father--sometimes we miss this because we forget who God is; by coming to Him and asking for wisdom, it allows us to pursue humility;

- *"Since we see that the Lord does not so require from us what is above our strength, but that he is ready to help us, provided we ask, let us, therefore, learn whenever he commands anything, to ask of him the power to perform it." (John Calvin)*

(3) "for the one who doubts"--James is referring to the individual(s) who is consistently inconsistent and wavering in their attitude toward God;

(4) the meaning of the word "double-minded" in the Greek is "double-souled" and is the individual who has no anchor in his soul and is unstable meaning they have a *"basic division in the soul that leads to thinking, speaking, and acting that contradicts one's claim to belong to God."* (Douglas Moo)

(5) James exhorts his readers to ask for wisdom with sincerity of purpose; wisdom helps with planning

- "*Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.*"  
(Psalm 119:2)

### **Final Thoughts | Where Do We Find Wisdom?**

- (1) In Scripture;
- (2) Prayer;
- (3) the Holy Spirit;
- (4) Community;
- (5) Experience

• *Are you in a storm? And if you are, what wisdom do you need to stop being unstable and double-minded and start being steadfast?*