

JAMES - SOUNDNESS OF SOUL FROM THE INSIDE OUT - Part two**Teaching #1801 - Sunday, May 3rd, 2015, 10:00 a.m.****Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON****LEARNING TO LIVE CONFIDENTLY IN THE GOOD WISDOM OF GOD**

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. [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."

1) **WHAT'S NEEDED MOST WHEN TRIALS COME?**

James 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

"**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.**" It's important to note the **context** of these words. The opening verses (2-4) define the **kind of wisdom** James is talking about:

James 1:2-4 - "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."

James is continuing on the same theme he opened with. For trials to produce fruit in my life I need wisdom. The specific **kind** of wisdom I need is the wisdom to **know** and the wisdom to **wait**. The **tall order of understanding trials and persevering in a godly way** isn't easy. It's **fruitful**, but it isn't **natural**.

My **normal reflex reactions** won't make me "**perfect, complete, lacking nothing**" (4). When the heat of trial is on, not one of us **feels** anything beneficial can possibly come out of it. James reminds these mistreated Christians they will get nothing good out of **reacting** and **acting** out of their hurt or agitated feelings.

That's why James says what we need most - what we should **ask for first** - is wisdom. What we need most is **wisdom** (5) - "Lord, I don't know how to cope with all this. I don't know what to do. I don't think I have the strength. My mind is full of confusion and discouragement, or perhaps even anger."

Trials come. And the first thing we all know about trials - **real** trials - is the way they make us **feel**. We immediately become aware of the **enormous discrepancy** between feeling the **pain and frustration** of the trial, and the description James gives of being **perfect, complete, lacking nothing**.

We feel like we either have to say **God doesn't care** and **our faith isn't working**, or - and this is perhaps even **worse** - we feel we have to **pretend** things are better than they are because we want to look like people of faith and spiritual power. And we've almost been taught that people of faith and power don't **experience** the kind of anxiety and confusion and disappointment we're feeling in our time of trial.

Where do we turn when our lives are being so shaken? What do you **do** when that overwhelming sense of weakness and ignorance sweeps over your soul? James begins with something so basic and obvious most of us wouldn't take time to mention it. **You start by praying.** You take your **reflexes** out and you bring **God** in. You refuse to **pre-judge** your situation. You don't assume you **already know** what your reaction should be. That's what prayer **means**.

It's OK to pray for God to **deliver** you from the trial. Many times God will. The Bible is full of times when our God is revealed as a **delivering God**. He delivered His people out of Egypt. He delivered Peter from prison. He delivered Paul from murderous thugs and poisonous snakes. Pray for deliverance from your trial. **Not** asking God to deliver you or heal you or bless you **isn't** a sign of spiritual maturity. It's OK to pray- just as **Jesus** taught us to pray - "**Deliver us from evil**" (Matthew 6:13).

Here is a simple rule to follow. I use it in my own life. Pray for deliverance from the trial. Pray for specific, immediate help.

Do your best to pray with faith and expectancy. All of this is fine, as long as you don't make your immediate deliverance ***the only answer from God you will accept.***

Refuse the nonsense of ***word faith positive confession.*** In all your asking, remember to ask and wait for ***wisdom.*** This is especially important when the trial lingers - when the situation gets ***worse*** rather than ***better.*** When that happens, ***ask and seek and knock and scratch and dig for wisdom.*** This is the command of the Scriptures. It's the command of the Scriptures because if you ***condition*** yourself that only ***your*** solution is the one you can ***accept*** from God, you will never become ***"perfect, complete, lacking nothing."***

Prayer can bring you something more precious than ***deliverance.*** It can bring you ***wisdom.*** It can, says James, make your life ***perfect*** in a way an immediate deliverance never will. You will ***find*** this kind of wisdom in no book, no sermon, no conference, no web site or blog. You must ***go directly to the source.*** You must ***ask God.*** You must ***linger*** and ***listen*** to Him. And you must learn to do this ***yourself.***

So this is ground zero - lesson number one. Trials don't automatically do ***anything*** good in your life or mine. We don't become godly simply by the net result of experiences accumulating in our lives. ***God*** has to be consciously and regularly ***mixed in.*** In all your asking, ask God for wisdom. The blessing and perfecting work of trials is something only ***He*** can bring.

2)

REMEMBER THE CHARACTER OF FATHER GOD WHEN YOU FACE THE TRIAL AND ASK FOR WISDOM

It's as though James knows we find it easier to pray when we feel blessed than when we feel stressed. So he places special encouragement in this wonderful fifth verse to build our confidence when we feel spiritually dry and weak or angry:

JAMES 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

Maybe you think you ***never*** make wise choices. Perhaps you think you are just ***programmed*** for failure and couldn't function with the kind of wisdom James describes here if it were to save your life. Perhaps you feel you just ***deserve*** bad things because you're such a foolish person to start with. I want to tell you two of the most beautiful things you will ever hear:

- a) ***When you ask God for wisdom He will give it "generously"***(5). The way we are used to picturing the meaning of "***generously***" doesn't catch all James is trying to say. Generous, in this verse, doesn't simply mean that He gives ***big quantities*** - ***two*** scoops of ice cream instead of just ***one.*** There's much more in this word than that.

The word translated ***generous*** here is "***haplos,***" and, while it frequently ***does*** carry the meaning of ***liberality,*** it also is translated around the concept of "***single***" or "***unmixed.***" A good example of this would be **Ephesians 6:5** - "***Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere (or "single") heart, as you would Christ....***"

That word "***sincere***" is the word "***haplotes,***" meaning "***singleness.***" And that's what Paul is trying to tell these servants in Ephesus. Servants aren't to be ***part-time servants.*** They aren't to serve ***only when the master is there looking over their shoulders.*** They are to be ***totally committed.*** They are to have a ***single goal.*** They are to have ***unmixed motives.*** They are to serve out of obedience to their master whether he's there watching them or not.

Now get the thrust of what James is saying. God is a perfect example of that sincere, or single heart toward you. ***God never has mixed feelings toward you.*** His commitment is never ***diluted.*** Even when the trial you face doesn't go away, God is still totally committed to perfecting and maturing your life. He is absolutely ***single*** in purpose. You can count on Him one hundred percent of the time. Go to God and ask for wisdom, says James. And when you ask, remember He is committed to nothing else, and nothing other than your ultimate good.

I said there were ***two*** beautiful truths in these verses. Here's the second:

- b) ***When you ask God for wisdom He will give it "without reproach"***(5). Here James deals with the most ***vicious attack of the enemy on our prayer efforts,*** a great misunderstanding of the heart of God. We feel so keenly ***the weight of our own unworthiness*** as we bend the knee to pray. James says we all need to deal with the idea that

somewhat God is ***anxious to lecture us whenever we approach Him for wisdom in our time of trial.***

Some of you can remember the days when, as a kid, you would ask your dad for your allowance. Those were days when parents didn't feel children were ***born*** with an undeniable ***right*** to an allowance. You didn't get an allowance because you and your father shared the same last name, or because you breathed in oxygen and breathed out carbon dioxide. You had to clean the garage, or cut the grass, or do the dishes, or shovel the snow.

And you knew what you would be asked when you asked for your fifty cents. Somehow getting your allowance was always tied with a lecture on the value of money and the meaning of life. Then would come the inevitable question - ***"What did you do with the last fifty cents I gave you? Did you blow all that money already?"***

That's giving ***with*** reproach. And, says James, God never does that. What a great thought! When you go to God for wisdom and help in your trial He never treats you like you have to ***justify*** coming to Him again. Each time is fresh and free and absolutely new. That's what we mean when we make reference to God's mercies ***"being new every morning."*** It's always ***the first time!***

If you don't believe that - if you don't ***remind yourself*** of that - if you think, in your heart of hearts, that God may well answer your prayer, but not without the fifty cent lecture first, going to Him for wisdom will never be your first response to trials.

Please remember this. When I go to God for wisdom in my time of trial, ***I never have to justify not already having the wisdom I need.*** There's no lecture. Some of the other translations of that same phrase simply say God gives wisdom generously and ***doesn't find fault.*** He doesn't feel the need to remind of past failures. ***That is simply not what God's heart is like at all.***

3) ASK GOD FOR WISDOM WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

James 1:6 - "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."

Notice how James moves from ***the way God gives*** to the ***way we must ask.*** There's a reason for that and it took me a long time to see it in this text. The way God ***gives*** is presented as the ***model*** for how we must ***ask.*** God ***gives*** with a single, unmixed, pure heart, and we must ***ask*** with single, unmixed, pure hearts.

Let me explain how these verses are frequently misinterpreted. We all get a picture of some poor person, desperately needing help from the Lord. He starts to pray. Suddenly he takes note of a doubtful thought coming to his mind the way your computer tracks spam in an email. Then we think of James' words - we must ***"ask in faith, with no doubting."*** And I just ***had*** a doubt. My faith ***was*** weak. I guess I'm just wasting my time even approaching God with that kind of mind.

And you all know how this process breeds more doubts. There is nothing that fixes your mind in a certain direction like trying ***not*** to have a certain kind of thought. Those very thoughts begin to come like locusts with a life and energy all their own.

Please listen. God has infinite compassion with people of ***weak*** faith. The Bible says so. The Bible says He ***"knows our frame and remembers we are dust."*** Jesus had nothing but compassion, and answered the cry of people with weak faith. That's ***not*** what James is describing in this verse.

What James is talking about isn't so much ***thoughts of doubt*** as ***conflicting loyalties.*** The word James uses for ***doubting*** in verse 6 is ***"diakrino,"*** and literally means ***"to separate, oppose, or withdraw from."*** In fact, you can see how the ***very same word*** is used in **Acts 11:1-2** - "Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. [2] So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party ***criticized*** him, saying...."

That word ***"criticized"*** is the very same word - ***diakrino*** - that James uses in our text for ***doubting*** - ***"Let him ask in faith with no doubting...."***(6). You can't try to walk in ***opposing directions*** if you want God's wisdom. That's what that picture of the sea driven by the wind is all about. Watch the sea in a strong wind. It's a random, wild, unpredictable, churning conglomeration of ***opposing forces.*** Nothing is channelled in ***one, uniform direction.*** ***You can't go to God for wisdom the***

way you go to a decorator for advice.

Now, James takes all that explosive imagery and ties it to calling on God for wisdom in your time of trial. Someone is mistreating you. Your rights have been trampled on. And you've already set up in your heart patterns of response that are driven by anger, bitterness, perhaps even hatred. James says there is no point whatsoever taking that matter to God in prayer. There's no point in mocking God by asking Him for His direction and blessing. You and God are moving in different directions.

Or here's another person who is having a season of doubt and discouragement. Things that were once clear and settled in his mind are all jumbled and unscrewed. Now he's not sure he's a Christian. And he's becoming angry with those who try to help him spiritually. Once he was all fired up and blessed. Now he's not sure he wants anything to do with Christianity.

James addresses these kinds of situations in this verse. Of course James knows people will face all kinds of trials and struggles. That's exactly what he's writing about. But you have to **set some direction to your life**. You can't **seek** God until you've decided you're going to **follow** God. You can't follow God's wisdom and cast your mind in all sorts of directions at the same time. Rule your spirit. Put all your eggs in one basket - **God's** basket.

4) **LEARN TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH**

JAMES 1:6b-8 - “....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 expands on a very serious problem. He pictures a troubled body of water. **The surface is driven solely by the wind**, never looking the same from one moment to the next. Everything goes in one direction, then it all goes in another. There no lack of **energy** - just **direction**.

Of course, he's describing **people who wander and drift spiritually**. They don't **take** life in any direction. They simply respond to the latest force that **shoves** them. They want God's help and blessing on their lives when they're in trouble. But the rest of the time they want to live life **pretty much on their own terms**. And, says James, because they're trying to posses **two** worlds, they will fully receive neither one.

Jesus laboured to describe an approach to life in His kingdom that was **free of cracks and divisions**. The most important thing, He said, was to “**love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength**.” In saying those words He wasn't trying to put the Christian life **out of reach** for ordinary Christians. He wasn't saying we all had to give away all our material goods and move to India to reach the lost. Those words of Jesus apply to you. If you give Jesus your life, you have to give Him **all** of it or **none** of it. There can't be splinters or crack or division at the core of your being.

Here is an inevitable spiritual law. You will grow in **wisdom** as you **practice giving Jesus all your life**. You will learn to do it in **small things first**. Don't look for **greatness** so much as **consistency**. Apply this to the whole of life. Make firm commitments right down the line, whether it's to choir, Bible Study, devotions, teaching a class, or church attendance.

To be strong spiritually you don't have to do **great things**. You have to do **ordinary things faithfully - with all your heart**. You have to **practice** living life like that. You can't just **pray** for it. These little commitments, faithfully kept, have more power over the rest of your life than you realize. They will help keep you in times of trial.

This same principle is so fundamental it is stated and restated over and over in the Scriptures in different words - **Proverbs 3:5-6** - “**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. [6] In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.**”

Small acts of faithfulness have more to do with bringing the wisdom and power of God into the trying times of life than you

can imagine.