**Asking for Wisdom in Faith**

*James 1:2-8*

**Introduction**

1. The best we can do for ourselves spiritually is to never think we know best, but always, in every circumstance, lean on the Lord for direction (**cf. Proverbs 3:5-8**).
2. How does this work? How does this look?
   1. Does it consist of an inner feeling of confidence based on professed trust in God? (I know in my heart it is right. I feel it. I trust in God.)
   2. Does it consist of persistent prayer for what you think is best? (Not praying for God to show us the best way, but praying that our way is best.)
3. In the context of undergoing trials, by inspiration James gives us a solid picture of how we cope with different matters of life, and approach them in the wisest, most effective way for our spiritual well-being – **James 1:2-8** (not simply for trials, but a general principle applied to trials in this text that can be applied in many circumstances)
4. James’ Plan for Enduring Trials (James 1)
5. The Goal
   1. There is an end goal to the trials we undergo as Christians. That goal should be identified – this is part of understanding the experience of such trials.
   2. **(vv. 2-4)** – Produces patience (endurance) to the end of maturity as a Christian.
   3. **Cf. Ephesians 4:13** – trying to reach maturity in Christ – endure as He endured. (MATURITY OF FAITH)
   4. This maturity is to the end of being prepared for judgment, thus, having the hope of heaven:
      1. **Cf. Romans 5:3-5** – tribulation to perseverance to character to hope that doesn’t disappoint. (Confident expectation of eternal life.)
      2. Goal of eternal life/heaven throughout context – **(vv. 12, 18, 20, 21, 25)**
   5. In order for trials to work for our good to the realization of this goal WE NEED GOD’S HELP.
6. The Need
   1. **(v. 5)** – lacking wisdom? Ask God.
   2. Wisdom – the soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of experience, knowledge, and good judgment. (New Oxford American Dictionary)
      1. Often defined, “ability to properly apply knowledge; often gained from experience.”
   3. Biblically – “There [in Proverbs] wisdom is the means by which the godly can both discern and carry out the will of God.” (Daniel H. King Sr – James; 150)
      1. **Proverbs 2:10-22** – Wisdom is that which leads one in God’s way.
   4. Concerning trials – ask God for wisdom TO UNDERSTAND THE “WHY” OF TRIALS, AND THE PROPER WAY OF DEALING WITH THEM ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL.
7. The Appropriation of Wisdom
   1. **(v. 5)** – If you lack the necessary wisdom, ASK GOD.
   2. **Cf. 3:13-18** – true wisdom from God.
   3. Wisdom revealed by the HS in the word of God – **1 Corinthians 2:7, 12, 13**
   4. Prayer and study for wisdom – **Colossians 1:9-10; Psalm 119:9-11, 17-19** (study, but the Psalm itself is a prayer)
8. The Condition to Meet in Prayer
   1. God places a condition on our asking for us to receive the wisdom we need – **(vv. 6-8)** – IN FAITH WITH NO DOUBTING – such asking will not receive anything from God.
   2. “in faith”
      1. Belief that God CAN and WILL give? – NO (not in context)
         1. **4:3** – same audience – they ask with expectation to receive – DON’T ASK WITH DOUBT AS TO RECEIVING.
         2. Presupposition to asking – **(v. 5)** – GOD WILL GIVE **(cf. Matthew 7:7, 11); (v. 7)** – SUPPOSING TO RECEIVE (it is God that says you won’t receive, even though you expect it – DON’T EXPECT IT.)
         3. WHY WOULD ONE ASK GOD FOR WISDOM IF HE DIDN’T THINK GOD COULD, OR WOULD ANSWER HIS PRAYER? (These are brethren who have faith enough to understand God and prayer.)
      2. In connection with TRUE FAITH, and FAITH’S GROWTH TO COMPLETION **(v. 4).** – YES (in context)
         1. Faith – **Romans 10:17** – comes from hearing God’s word. (ASKING GOD FOR DIRECTION, FOUND IN HIS WORD, FULLY TRUSTING IN THE DIRECTION GOD GIVES.)
         2. Fits the contrast of doubting 🡪
   3. “with no doubting”
      1. NOT doubting whether God CAN or WILL give what you ask of Him. (SEE PRESUPPOSITION – **vv. 5, 7; 4:3**)
      2. Doubting – “lit., "to separate throughout or wholly" (*dia*, "asunder," *krino*, "to judge," from a root *kri--*, meaning "separation"), then, to distinguish, decide, signifies, in the Middle Voice, "to separate oneself from, or to contend with,"” (VINE)
         1. In contrast to “IN FAITH” – I.E. TRUE FAITH WHICH COMES FROM, AND IS BASED IN GOD’S WORD.
         2. The “separation” and “contend[ing] with” is with God’s word IN CONTEXT.
            1. Asking for wisdom from God without contention – wisdom offered in His word.
            2. **(v. 21)** – meekness – disposition of humility before God which accepts His direction – “It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting” (VINE)
      3. Doubting man is LIKE WAVE OF SEA and is DOUBLE-MINDED:
         1. Wave of sea – **Isaiah 57:20** – wicked who have no stability of direction or peace because at odds with God’s word.
         2. Double-minded – **4:8** – the sinner who claims to have a mind to serve God, but is still with a mind to serve self in the world.
            1. ***“unstable in all his ways” – (v. 26)*** – ways of religion.
            2. I.E. BECAUSE HE ASKS GOD FOR WISDOM WITH A MIND TO GO HIS OWN WAY HE ACTS IN VAIN.
            3. **(vv. 19-21, 26) –** He is not swift to hear God’s word, but his tongue is unbridled. AS THE DOUBLE-MINDED MAN, HE ANSWERS BACK AT GOD WITH HIS OWN WISDOM.
   4. ILLUSTRATION – Child asks parent for advice having already made up their mind. With that knowledge, the parent will reply similar to this – “Why should I give you my advice if you have already decided what you’re going to do?” **(v. 7** – he won’t receive anything from the Lord!)
   5. ASKING WITH DOUBTING:
      1. **(v. 8)** – double-minded – mind is split – HAS HIS OWN IDEAS.
      2. **(vv. 13-15)** – drawn away by his own desires in temptation – NOT FROM GOD.
         1. TEMPTATION – **(v. 12**) – same word as TRIALS of **v. 2** – TOWARD POSITIVE OUTCOME.
            1. ***“BLESSED IS A MAN WHO PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL” (NASB).***
         2. Rightly TEMPTED of **v. 13** because – TEMPTED BY EVIL – TOWARD NEGATIVE OUTCOME.
      3. **(vv. 19-20)** – such a contention does not produce God’s righteousness. (**cf. Romans 1:16-17** – that is produced in the gospel)
      4. **(vv. 22-24**) – deceives self by not doing God’s word – hearing only.
      5. **(v. 26**) – such religion is useless! (Answering against God’s direction and following with own plan.)
      6. PRAYER FOR WISDOM WITHOUT ACCEPTING WHAT GOD IS TELLING US TO DO IN SCRIPTURE.
   6. ASKING IN FAITH:
      1. (**vv. 5-6)** – asks God for wisdom in faith WITHOUT doubting – HIS MIND IS FULLY MADE UP ON DOING WHATEVER IT IS THAT GOD REQUIRES.
      2. (**v. 12**) – is able to endure temptation (TRIAL) because of following God’s direction.
         1. NOTE: ***“those who love Him”*** – **John 14:15** – keep commandments. (wisdom found in HIS WORD)
         2. In trials – **Matthew 24:12-13** (concerning the trials faced by believers in A.D. 70 – destruction of Jerusalem)
      3. **(vv. 16-18)** – Temptation to evil is not from God, but He gives what is good, especially life through His word.
         1. **(v. 13)** – tempted – to do what is contrary to God’s direction.
         2. **(v. 18)** – spiritual life through God’s word – CONTINUES INTO AND THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.
      4. (**v. 19**) – swift to hear. Hear what?
      5. **(v. 21)** – God’s word – IT, NOT YOUR WILL, IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS. (Emphasize MEEKNESS)
      6. **(v. 25)** – is a doer of the word, not simply a hearer – BLESSED SPIRITUALLY – life now lived for Christ, and in the judgment.
      7. PRAYER FOR WISDOM WITH ACCEPTING GOD’S DIRECETION IN SCRIPTURE.
9. Asking for Wisdom in Faith
10. Enduring Trials
    1. James gives a specific example of some trials that the brethren to whom he is writing might experience, and what should be their proper response.
    2. **(vv. 9-11)** – trials to both poor and rich brethren.
       1. POOR (lowly) **– v. 9** – glory in exaltation (spiritually).
          1. Do not envy, especially not the ungodly! – **cf. Psalm 73:1-3**
          2. Do not get distracted with earthly cares, but focus on spiritual matters – **Matthew 6:33**
          3. Don’t use worldly wisdom to gain riches – **James 3:14-16**
          4. BUT GLORY IN EXALTATION – may not be rich physically, but you are spiritually – **James 2:5**
          5. Be content with Christ – **Philippians 4:11-13**
          6. Keep self-unspotted from the world – **(v. 27) – 1 Timothy 6:9** – desiring to be rich will lead to temptations.
             1. Poor were often ORPHANS and WIDOWS.
             2. EX: Widows would revert to prostitution to support their family. Others would revert to theft. (DON’T)
       2. RICH – **vv. 10-11** – glory in humiliation (spiritually)
          1. Do not trust in riches – **1 Timothy 6:17 (vv. 10b-11** – THEY FADE AWAY)
          2. Facing social ostracism, do not conform to the way of the worldly rich – **James 2:6; Romans 12:2**
          3. INSTEAD, GLORY IN HUMILIATION – **1 Timothy 6:6-7; Matthew 6:20-21** – can’t take riches with you, but true riches are spiritual.
          4. Associate with the humble – **Romans 12:16** – especially your poor brethren.
             1. **(v. 27)** – instead of treating them as lowly, use your means to help them.
             2. **1 Timothy 6:18-19** – be rich in good works.
11. In General – in living life for Christ we are in constant need of guidance and wisdom. We need to pray for such wisdom in conjunction with prayer, always with the heart of accepting God’s counsel. NEVER HAVING SECRET RESERVATIONS IN OUR HEART FOR OUR OWN WILL – **Daniel 1:8** (Like Daniel purposing in his heart); **Proverbs 3:5-8** (LEANING FULLY ON THE LORD)

**Conclusion**

1. God has given us the blessed promise of wisdom. If we ask, He is faithful to give – HE WANTS US TO SUCCEED SPIRITUALLY.
2. However, we must be honest in our asking Him for such – DO WE REALLY WANT WHAT GOD WANTS? DO WE REALLY THINK HIS WAY IS THE BEST?
3. We must ask God for wisdom in faith without doubting, rather, with the full intention of submitting ourselves to His wisdom.