

James 1:5-8

Introduction

1. A young man went off to college for his freshman year.¹ After 1st yr parents asked:
 - a. *What do you know? Do you know more than when you went? Oh, yes! I do!*
 - b. 2nd yr same question: *Do you know more than when you went? Oh, no!*
 - c. *I know great deal less. Well, you're [making progress],* said his dad. 3rd yr same:
 - d. *What do you know now? Oh! I don't think I know anything. You're right,* said dad.
 - e. *You have now [benefitted] since you say you know nothing.*
2. See what college ed. can do for you? Takes 3yrs to learn you don't know anything.
 - a. And then once you've figured that out, you are ready to really learn, aren't you?
 - b. Do you know it is the same way w/God's wisdom? Read 1 Corinthians 8:2. (**Show**)
 - c. *He who is convinced that he knows nothing of himself, as he ought to know, gives up steering his ship, and lets God put his hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom, and cries, "O God! My little wisdom is cast at your feet: my little judgment is given to you."*²
 - d. 1st step in gaining God's wisdom for life is realizing we don't have it. It is saying →
 - e. *"O God! My little wisdom is cast at your feet: my little judgment is given to you."*
3. (**Title/Text**) Especially needed w/trials isn't it. That's time tempted follow own wisdom.

I. WE MUST RECOGNIZE OUR LACK OF WISDOM (V. 5).

A. Very 1st Step In Having Is Admitting We Don't By Ourselves.

1. **IF** = 1st class condition in Greek = writer assumes this to be true of all of us
2. **any** = each one individually must recognize it; 1st step to getting help is admit need.
 - a. AA is built on this premise. Can't get help until realize need it.³
 - b. Spiritually true also. Can't have wisdom until realize don't have it.⁴

B. What Is Distinctive about Biblical Wisdom?

1. Practical righteousness in everyday living.⁵

- a. Two types of wisdom - theoretical and practical (technical/philosophical⁶)
- b. Wisdom is not isolated fr. life but is designed to help deal w/problems/struggles life.
- c. Wisdom = *sound judgment, practical wisdom,⁷ practical use of knowledge, good judgment in the face of demands made by human life and specifically by the Christian life.*⁸

2. It is divine, sourced in God through His Word.

- a. Job's 28:12-15, 20, 23. Not common sense. Smart people often do foolish things.
- b. Common sense not lead us to see our troubles as beneficial & as helpful.
- c. The longer they go on and the more difficult they are the more we are tempted to complain, grumble, doubt God, resent what we've been called to bear and react immaturely, not w/wisdom.

¹ Elon Foster (1992), *6000 Sermon Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Entry #6049.

² Charles Spurgeon, *Ibid*.

³How do AA meetings start? *Hi, my name is So-&-So and I'm an alcoholic.* Immediately the others begin applauding because the first step in beating an addiction is admitting it.

⁴As we come to church this morning this should be our perspective: *Hi, my name is Pastor Brian and I lack wisdom.* Immediately everyone in the church starts applauding. Hurray! P. B. gets it! There's hope!

⁵ Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 48: James*, 1998 (electronic ed.).

⁶ **Philosophy simply means the study of wisdom. It is how to be wise in living life.**

⁷ Liddell, H. G. (1996). *A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁸ Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1979). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*: Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

3. It is Christlike. He is the standard.

- a. 1 Cor. 1:24, 30 say that Christ is the wisdom of God. *I am the truth*, said Jesus.
- b. Asking for wisdom is like asking to be like Christ (mind, think, react, do).

II. WE MUST REQUEST FROM THE LORD OF WISDOM (v. 5)**A. God's Nature.**

1. Sometimes view God in the wrong way. Particularly in hardship feel He's not there.
2. If God were with me, so we often think, this wouldn't be happening.
3. Not true. God = generous God. *God is good all the time; all the time God is good.*
 - a. Two ways to translate: *let him ask God, who gives or let him ask the giving God*
 - b. *let him ask of the giving God;*⁹ God's vry. nature give. Pres. tense = continue
 - c. Unbeliever sees God w/clenched fist; believer sees w/open hand (Rom. 8:32).

B. God's Generosity

1. *He gives equally.* Not just for pastors, missionaries, Bible college students.
2. *He gives sincerely.*
 - a. *gives to all generously; singly, in one way* (Mt.6:22 – eye is single)
 - b. G gives w/single motive: further welfare asker. No ulterior motive. Get return.
3. *He gives eagerly.*
 - a. *without reproach* (NIV - w/o finding fault); God does not criticize or scold us.
 - b. Doesn't say, *I just helped you last week, or Why not come sooner?*
 - c. *You really messed up and now you turn to me? Well, just a little too late.*
 - d. *Share about lady who said, Pray that I'll have wisdom not waste all this.*
 - e. An associate of mine, a gifted secretary, was going through great trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then he had to be taken to the hospital where (we were sure) he would die. I saw her in church one Sunday and assured her that I was praying for her. "What are you asking God to do?" she asked, and her question startled me. "I'm asking God to help you and strengthen you," I replied. "I appreciate that," she said, "but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!"¹⁰
 - f. *Are we wasting our trials? Are they doing us no good? Don't have to.*

III. WE MUST REALIZE THE LIMIT ON WISDOM (vv. 6-8)**A. Don't Limit God**

1. Isn't this one of the saddest statements you have ever read? We can limit God.
 - a. Not in His sovereign purposes/plan. Not in His eternal decree.
 - b. But we can limit Him in our lives by rejecting His wisdom in favor of ours.
2. Think of all God has done for us in sending Jesus for us. All ready stands do for us.

B. Lack of Trust Limits God (v. 6).

1. Bible consistently lays down principle that G requires faith for answered prayer.
2. When trace the word faith find it involves three essentials:
 - a. *A firm conviction that God's Word is reliable and true* (1 Thess. 1:5).
 - b. *A personal surrender to the Lord* (John 1:12).
 - c. *A conduct directed by such surrender* (2 Cor. 5:7).

⁹The Amplified New Testament, 1999.¹⁰Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. *The Bible exposition commentary*. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

3. This kind of faith holds onto God during testing. Confidence despite circumstances.

C. Double-mindedness Limits God (vv. 6-8).

1. Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting.

- a. This has nothing to do w/doubting whether God can do something or not.
- b. Has nothing do with young faith, weak faith or faltering faith. Honest doubt.

2. James explains exactly what it means with two descriptions.

a. double-minded man = a man two-souled (lit.)

- i. doubter's inner attitude. Acts like 2 souls/persons in body, constant conflict.
- ii. The one is turned Godward, while the other is turned toward the world.
- iii. He is a "walking civil war in which trust/distrust wage continual battle."¹¹
- iv. John Bunyan of *Pilgrim's Progress* called him "Mr. Facing-both-ways."
- v. I call him the fence-sitter (one foot firmly planted in world, other foot in God).

b. like wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind

- i. Yrs-ago Ellen and I were out on Lake MI in a tour boat & it was very rough.
- ii. Great Lakes storms can be more choppy than ocean since lake is contained.
- iii. Choppy waves that go up and down, this way and that way. 4 dimensional.

3. Doubter like this. Unstable in all his ways.

- a. The doubter has no solid conviction in God that keeps him on a steady course.
- b. He is led about by his desires and what feels good or right.
- c. Says wants to do right thing, but when faced w/what that is he says it won't work.
- d. Can never be depended upon to do the right thing especially when it's the hard thing.

4. Application

- a. If father, don't be like this. Family needs someone firm, who trusts God. They need someone who will set a clear spiritual direction that you follow no matter what. Don't say you believe God and then not make the hard choices to live for Him. Don't put world 1st & Lord 2nd.
- b. If a young person, don't be crowd-pleaser. Don't come to youth group all pious and spiritual, but then during the week follow another crowd saying & acting in ways God disapproves of. Don't be two-faced with God.

c. If you don't make up your mind, then your unmade mind will unmake you. Here is the place where there must be no dallying. For any dallying will be the Trojan horse that will get on the inside and open the gates to the enemy. God can do anything for the man who has made up his mind; he can do little or nothing for the double-minded.¹²

d. "O God! My little wisdom is cast at your feet: my little judgment is given to you."¹³

¹¹ Hiebert, D. Edmond (1979). *The Epistle of James*. Chicago: Moody Press, (James 1:8).

¹² E. Stanley Jones, *The Way to Power and Poise*, p. 258.

¹³ Charles Spurgeon, op. cit., *6000 Sermon Illustrations*, Entry #6049.