

James 1:5-8
“Putting together what takes us apart”

- I. Introduction
- II. Vs. 5 What and Who
- III. Vs. 6-8 How

I. Introduction

Reading this letter of James in its entirety reveals that “*prayer*” was something that the readers struggled with. Here we are told that they needed to ask for wisdom but must do so with faith and not being doubled minded. In Chapter 4:1-3 they were being exhorted to make sure that they pray for the right things and finally in chapter 5:13-18 they are again told to make sure that they don’t lack faith when they are sick and need to be healed.

In verses 5-8, James connects trials and our need to be perfected by them with prayer.

He does so by use of the same word in verse 4 and 5, saying in verse 4 that enduring trials and the maturity such endurance will produce as causing us to “*lack nothing*”. Then in verse 5 he says the key to such endurance is that if we are “*lacking wisdom*” in our understanding of the purpose of trials ask God. *It immediately becomes apparent that James was addressing the fact that too many of his readers didn’t believe that there was anything redemptive in the trial and would never think of asking God for wisdom. Instead their prayer was NOT for wisdom but deliverance but, “Get me out, NOW”, instead of “Grant me wisdom so I can see more of you and Your work.”* We also note that they were NOT to ask for knowledge; the mere accumulation of information but for wisdom, the understanding for living! James makes yet another amazing statement saying that: Trials indicate that you just got accepted into the most prestigious university there has ever been the University of the “Living God” in who we are told Colossians 2:2-3 is where “all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Trials seen this way indicate that the trials mentioned in verse 2 are nothing more than gigantic opportunities to become wise! It is not the genius that has the head start on wisdom it is the afflicted!

II. Vs. 5 What and Who

Vs. 5 The invitation is made towards the believer for wisdom and not knowledge. **It is not for the ability to take things apart but to put them back together.** Further more the wisdom being asked for is specific in nature, the wisdom necessary to endure through trials. **What is interesting is that the petition is for wisdom NOT for strength, grace or deliverance!** The reason for this was already stated above as trials were understood as being beneficial to maturity when:

- **Character was placed above comfort**
- **Outlook determined outcome**
- **Attitude determined action**

The wisdom being solicited is seen as **essential** so that we will not miss the opportunity God is giving us to mature by allowing us the trial! **Wisdom helps us “put together” that which seems to “take apart” our lives!** There is not a believer I know that hasn’t found themselves crying out to God at some point during a trial. The only question is why do we insist in waiting so long until we do? We seem to think that our prayers to God are only few with a short shelf life as to be used only in desperation when every other device known to man has been exhausted. James takes up the word “*lacking*” in verse 4 and ties it to verse 5 as he reminds his readers that the “**prerequisite**” to obtain “**HELP**” with our trials is threefold:

1. **Vs. 5a WHAT to ask: Wisdom**
2. **Vs. 5b WHO to ask: God**
3. **Vs. 6 HOW to ask: In faith**

James starts by tells his readers **WHAT to ask: Wisdom.** Spurgeon called “*wisdom the right use of knowledge*”. Perhaps you have discovered that it is easier to see the purpose of trials in other people’s life’s, but when we are going through the fire we find it difficult to navigate through the smoke, heat and debris! **There are nine Hebrew words and five Greek words James could have used that would have been translated into English with the word “PRAY” but James by way of**

the Holy Spirit by-passes all of those and choose the common word translated “ASK”! All we have to do is ASK. In the Greek the phrase “*let him ask of God*” is literally “**let him ask the constantly giving God**”! We need to heed this little motto: “**Unless there is within us that which is above us, we will soon yield, to that which surrounds us!**”

Next James take us **WHO to ask: God!** Here **James reveals three truths about the Person we are petitioning, God.**

1. **He is good:** “*Who gives*”, James will declare about God in 1:17 that, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*” Specifically, James is speaking of God’s gift of wisdom which is affirmed else where in scripture as we are told in Job 12:13 where we are told that “*With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.*” Or as we read in Proverbs 2:6 “*For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding*”. From this, **we not only learn that God is good but that He is also the Source of all wisdom and that he gives it to all who ask!** God never turns away a request from His children for wisdom in the midst of trials! It may not be answered on our schedule or timing but He always answers.
2. **He is generous:** “*to all liberally*”, is James’ next declaration about God. The word in the Greek has to meanings which are both implied here:
 - a. “**To stretch out**” which pictures God spreading out all His wisdom that is available so that the person that asks has all that is needed. God “*lavishes*” His wisdom upon those that ask for it. He doesn’t distribute His wisdom sparingly but gives those that ask more than enough to supply what is needed.
 - b. “**Simply**” which implies the method in distribution is straightforward and easily to assimilate into our lives. God’s wisdom that lavished upon those that ask is done so in a manor that makes it easy for the petitioner to apply it.
3. **He is gracious:** “*without reproach*”, reveals James final truth about God. The Greek word rendered “*reproach*” means to “*insult*”. In the Greek the phrase “**Without reproach**” reminds the readers that **God will pour His wisdom over us without putting us down!** When we come to God for wisdom, He never says, “**What are you coming to Me again? What did you do with the wisdom I just gave you? You didn’t seem to appreciate the wisdom I gave you last time as you didn’t use it! Why don’t you use what I just gave you before you ask for more?**” All of which to by very frank He could do with me but He doesn’t. He never gets His digs in when we deserve it and instead offers what we so little appreciate and appropriate, WISDOM!

III. Vs. 6-8 How

Vs. 6-8 James tells us what the number one reason for unanswered prayer is, **Unbelief!** This brings us lastly to **HOW to ask: In faith!** **Such unbelief is NOT based upon ignorance as we are already told in verse 5 three truths about God whom we have petitioned for wisdom: He is good, He is generous and He is gracious!** The very least our God deserves is to be trusted but it is what we fail the most often to do! Sixteen times in this short letter James uses the word “faith”

as it is the only way we can approach God; to do other wise is suggestive that we can make our own decisions apart from His wisdom and ways. The cause for God not answering our cries for wisdom is not God, says James but our inability to trust Him. **Jesus has made every person who has received Him wise and as such we now have wisdom that previously we didn't.** Prior to this we were those that Psalm 14:1 spoke of, "*The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*" **The starting place for wisdom is always to be found in believing and trust God! How foolish we can be at times not trusting God Who didn't spare His only son, shall He now keep His wisdom from those who have trust His Son?** Why is it that the doubter of God will NOT receive the wisdom God but runs towards the foolish from the lips of men?

James likens the double-minded man of verse 8 to that of "*waves of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*" Through this letter James will use nature as illustrations and here he no doubt was referencing his own experiences on the Sea of Galilee. In so doing James identifies this doubting person as one who is encouraged one moment and discouraged the next and becomes sea sick with emotions. Someone who one minute believes the truths about God then the next doesn't. They are allowing the situation and trial to determine faith instead of allowing faith to determine the trial. James is that the believer is rewarded by enduring trials with greater Christ-like character, there is always a cross before there is a crown, suffering before glory! The person of faith is a stable person as their focus and trust is in God's character and promises and not upon their circumstances. God is not only able but willing and all we need to look at is that it was God who didn't spare His only begotten Son for us and while Jesus was here he was severely tested beyond all men as he was born in poverty, died in disgrace and all the while thought it well worth the earthly trial!

James compares the person who doubts as a person being tossed about in the sea, and in verse 8 clarifies this as being doubled-minded. We can have joyful attitude in trials because we can know be on any doubt that we are loved by God and what He has allowed us is for our benefit. Love and faith go hand in hand; when you are loved by someone and you love them in response you trust them and you do not hesitate to ask them for help based upon that love. James describes this wisdom in 3:17 as being *“from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”* We must not believe that such trials are punishment and instead believe that they are sent to release God’s promises.