

Epistle of James

Week 3 – January 3, 2010

James 1:6-12

1:6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we ask (for wisdom), we are to believe and not doubt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – But let him ask in faith: Our request for wisdom must be made like any other request – in faith, without doubting God’s ability or desire to give us His wisdom. • “because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” • “WISDOM” will be brought up again in chapter 3
1:7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord, “he is a double-minded man” (“dipsuchos” – wavering, uncertain, doubting) • “unstable in all he does” (“akatastatos” – unstable, inconstant) • According to Hiebert, double-minded is literally <i>two-souled</i>. “The man of two souls, who has one for the earth, and another for heaven: who wishes to secure both worlds; he will not give up earth, and he is loth to let heaven go.” (Clarke) • a double-souled person is a person whose heart's loyalties are divided, a person who has not decided to give his or her love to God. The <i>doubt</i> then is a vacillation between self-reliance and God-reliance. • In summary: If you encounter a trial and lack wisdom to know what to do, stand the test of faith by asking God for the wisdom you need. As you ask God for wisdom, do not be unbelieving toward God or frightened about your lack of wisdom. Instead, trust God to give wisdom generously. He will do so. Therefore consider it pure joy that you face the trial, for that very trial will be used by God to develop your perseverance toward maturity.
<p>It seems that James has made a sudden shift in his subject, from trials & wisdom to riches & humility. AND/OR James is looking at “humble circumstances” as a trial.</p>	
1:9 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue - one's relationship with material wealth. In the early church, Christians suffered economically for their faith. Even today, money is the context for some of our most common and spiritually significant trials. Examples? • In this world, money can be a validation of our personal worth; provide a sense of security; may provide power or advantage; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – V. 9-10 – money has NOTHING to do with our personal worth – V.11 – there is NO security found in money - <i>the rich man</i> mentioned by James is a non-Christian - he understands his Christian readers to be poor people suffering in the trial of deprivation – V. 12 James calls us to believe this: the crown of eternal life is worth more than any advantage to be gained by money in this life. Truly <i>blessed</i> is the one whose heart is set on this goal. – James has begun v. 12 with "blessed" <i>makarios</i>, like a new beatitude recalling Matthew 5:3-10 and especially 5:11-12, where Jesus encouraged perseverance in trials "because great is your reward in heaven." Putting these observations together, the crown of life would be the ultimate reward, the fulfillment of eternal life and the exaltation with Christ which will be enjoyed by those who, because of faith in Christ, have loved God enough to live faithfully, obeying him even through trials.
<p>James the Just, with his deep moral earnestness, wants to help suffering Christians find the strength to make tough moral choices. He therefore calls us to face the issue of <i>worth</i>. Persevering is worth doing, because the crown of life is worth more than avoiding the trial. James calls for courageous applications of this principle. Giving up on a difficult ministry, retaliating against people who are mistreating you, withdrawing from active participation in worship and fellowship, compromising moral standards, interrupting your life of obedience, turning away from a walk of fellowship with the Lord--all these responses to adversity assume that escaping the trial is of more value than gaining the crown of life. The Christian is called to place greater value on the goal of becoming mature and complete in Christ.</p>	