



JAMES—A STUDY (PART TWO)
CHAPTER 1 VERSES 5 TO 12

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This is the second in a series of messages on the book of James. The previous message can be found on our “Messages” page at www.thewellhonduras.org

Chapter 1 Verses 5 to 8

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8) In the previous message, we looked at the fact that as human beings and as Christians, we have to live through various trials. We saw that in the middle of those trials, God wants us to persevere. To continue listening to Him and obeying Him however difficult that may be; thus developing a character marked by patience and perseverance. But we also need wisdom, to know specifically how to keep obeying God in the middle of the trial.

God says here that He gives wisdom to all those who ask, with just one exception. Those who don't ask *in faith*, the *double-minded*, receive nothing. That is, those who hear God's voice but don't put their trust in what He has said and don't act on it. We've seen that faith without works is not faith. It serves no purpose to hear God's voice, even to trust in what He's said, but then not obey it. That's not faith, because faith without works is not faith.

James 2:26 says that *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* When your spirit and soul leave your body, your body dies. The soul and spirit continue living; it's only the body that dies, because apart from the spirit the body can't live. (Hence God gives us a new body for the next life.) In the same way, faith cannot live without works; it's dead just like the body is dead without the spirit. So, we must not only listen to God's voice but also choose to trust it and obey it. Only if we have this heart and take this stance will we be able to receive the wisdom that God so liberally offers us.

The opposite of a double-minded man is a person of integrity: someone who hears God's voice and puts it into practice. *The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.* (Proverbs 11:3) The upright are guided by their integrity. As you seek to know which path to take, walk in integrity, putting into practice what God has already shown you, and this very integrity will guide you; it will serve as a conduit for you to continue to be guided by God's wisdom.

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool. (Proverbs 19:1) We know that God is a God of truth, there is no lie in Him, and so no lie should be found on the lips or in the lives of His children. Our actions should match our beliefs, and our beliefs should be rooted in what God says. *He that is perverse in his lips* is the double-minded man, unbalanced and unstable in all his ways. It's better, and far more fulfilling, to consistently do what God wants than to ignore Him and live for our own agenda.

The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. (Proverbs 20:7) The just walks in his integrity, hearing and obeying; having faith and works, and because of this his children are blessed after him; they receive the inheritance of a sound example.

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The word "integrity" used here comes from the Hebrew "tôm", which means "upright, pure, complete." The man of integrity is the upright man, true to his relationship with God; the pure man, not allowing His walk with God to be compromised; the complete man, paying close attention to what God says, and living it in humble dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit to enable his obedience. In other words, the man who allows Jesus to be Lord of all his life and walks in real faith, persevering in God's will for his life moment by moment, often in the midst of trial, staying true to the faith which God has placed within him.

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

Chapter 1 Verses 9 to 11

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted (James 1:9) James is not speaking of poor people in general; rather, specifically of brothers and sisters in the Lord who are poor. And what does God say to them? Rejoice that you are exalted! The poor in this world can at the same time be saving and storing up great riches in heaven. No matter how poor a person might be here, he may already be extremely rich in heaven. Jesus said exactly that: *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* (Luke 12:32-34) He's speaking of a savings plan in the best bank ever; the Bank of Heaven. Totally free from thieves; free from fragile economies; free from sudden emergencies that eat up all your finances in an instant. The Bank of Heaven! Anyone can open an account and begin to save massive riches there. So where is your treasure? Ask yourself the question, because that will show you where your heart is also. If you have your eyes fixed on the on the things of God, in fact on God Himself, that's where your heart will be. And that's how you will store up treasures in the life to come. Simply loving and obeying God here on this earth.

Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10:28-31 ESV) If you choose to obey God and this puts you in conflict with your loved ones, or means that you have to let go of some of your possessions, or not take advantage of opportunities offered to you in this life; if obeying God means you have to leave some of these good things of this world to one side, God will reward you. It says He will reward you here on this planet, but that these rewards will be accompanied by persecutions. And in the world to come He will reward you with eternal life; with an incredibly abundant life. These are the rewards that all those who have obeyed the Lord Jesus here on the earth will receive. We don't take anything of this world with us when we die. Absolutely nothing. In ancient times the Egyptian Pharaohs were buried with many possessions: gold and silver, lots of furniture and tools, clothes, food, even pets and slaves, because they believed they would need these things in the world to come; when in fact it was the grave-robbers that got to enjoy those things. Because we take nothing with us when we die. Just ourselves, and what God has done in us. It is there that we will receive our reward, and the reward will be based on what God has done in us here.

So the poor person here, the person of "low degree" will take more with him when he dies than the rich who has enjoyed many things here but has not obeyed God. Hence many who are first will be last and the last first.

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (James 2:5) God has chosen the poor, those who receive the rich faith that He offers to them, to be recompensed in the world to come.

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:24-25 ESV) Does God show favoritism towards the poor? No. God doesn't love the poor more than the rich. The Bible makes this clear: *You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.* (Leviticus 19:15 NASB)

But the truth is that it's easier for a poor person to develop a thorough trust in God because, and this is something we see daily where we minister in the third world, many times he has to literally trust God for his daily food. He knows he needs faith! Meanwhile it's more difficult for the rich person, because the world teaches him that he can trust in his own wealth, in his savings, in his power and position; hence his need to trust in God is not so obvious to him. That's why James says that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith.

And the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. (James 1:10-11 NASB) There are rich people who are also rich in faith. But they are few. What does it mean for the rich man to glory in his humiliation? It means that even though he may have the things of this world in abundance, and opportunity to have power and influence, he chooses to trust in Jesus and obey Him, rather than trust in his wealth and live for himself. It's not sin to be rich. Depending on how the person obtained their money, of course, but if a person has gained their money honestly, it's not sin to be wealthy. But the rich man must learn to trust in God not in his wealth; and not to live for himself, but to do the will of God. He must choose to have a humble heart before God. In fact the wealthy have a unique and beautiful opportunity to know what it is to walk in this kind of humility. To understand what it is like to possess much but not to place their trust in their possessions. To humble themselves before God, not depending on their power and influence to inform their decisions, but rather depending on God for wisdom and seeking to glorify Him through disciplined obedience.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17ESV) Yes, God wants the wealthy man to enjoy the things he has! As long as he doesn't trust in his riches but rather in the living God. And furthermore, *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.* (vs 18-19) Once again we see reference made to the Bank of Heaven, where the rich may also save, through their obedience to God's will, expressed in part through their generosity in this life, and their rich good works.

Note that verse 17 says, "*the rich in this present age...*", in the same way that James speaks of "*the poor of this world...*". There is a clear distinction made between the rich and poor of this world, and the rich and poor of the world to come. Because there are poor in this world who will be rich in the next world. There are rich in this world who will be poor in the world to come. Equally there are poor in this world who will be poor in the world to come, and rich who will be rich, because many who are first will be last, and the last first: Many, but not all. Everything depends on the individual's relationship to God.

The following quote speaks of the verses from James that we have been looking at today, about the poor, the rich, and trials:

No condition of life is such as to hinder rejoicing in God. Those of low degree may rejoice, if they are exalted to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God; and the rich may rejoice in humbling providences, that lead to a humble and lowly disposition of mind. Worldly wealth is a withering thing. Then, let him that is rich rejoice in the grace of God, which makes and keeps him humble; and in the trials and exercises which teach him to seek happiness in and from God, not from perishing enjoyments. (Matthew Henry)

Chapter 1 Verse 12

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (James 1:12 KJV) To endure temptation means to stand your ground, trusting and obeying God in spite of everything. Not giving up ground, not going backwards. Persevering in the things of God. Staying faithful to Him in the face of temptation. And it says here that when he is tried he will receive a reward. From the original Greek this can also be translated, "when he has stood the test" or "when he is approved." A person who comes through the trial approved. Someone who has not given in to the temptation; on the contrary he has stayed faithful to God right till the end of the test. He comes out approved by God.

LET YOUR LOVE
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In Bible times, there was no banking system such as we have today, and no bank notes. All the money was made from metal, heated until it became liquid, poured into molds to harden. Once the coins had hardened, their unequal edges had to be shaved and smoothed. The coins were quite soft so of course some people shaved them more than necessary and kept the shavings. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens in an attempt to stop the practice of shaving coins that were already in circulation. Because you could shave your coins at home and build up a supply of metal from which you could have new coins made. But some money-changers were men of integrity who would not accept coins that were not genuine. There were men of honor who only put coins that hadn't been shaved into circulation. These men became known as the "dokimos" or "the approved ones." That's the same word used here for *when he is tried*, or *when he has stood the test*. The approved ones. Men of integrity. So in the midst of the trial, whatever it might be, God wants us to stay faithful to Him. And thus come out of it approved.

With every trial comes a temptation. That's why the two things are mentioned together in the verse, temptation and trial. With trials come temptations, and the main temptation is to doubt God and hence to take things in our own hands. For example, you might be going through a difficult time in your marriage, and along comes the temptation to find another man or woman who "will understand you more." The trial consists in the difficulties in your marriage; from there you are tempted to seek an 'escape,' "Why don't you find someone who will *really* love and understand you?" Or perhaps a trial in your workplace. Your boss wants you to lie. If you don't do it you'll lose their favor and possibly your chances of promotion. That's a temptation in the midst of a trial. Or perhaps at school. To avoid losing friends you feel the need to compromise your Christian principles. It's a difficult situation, a trial, and in the middle of the trial the temptation to seek an escape route certainly looks attractive. It seems easier to give in than to trust that God's faith within you will bring you through as you stay faithful. Don't tell me you're too mature or spiritual to be tempted. Even Jesus was tempted in every way like we are, and I don't think any of us are more mature or spiritual than Him. But God wants us to endure the temptation. To not give in to the temptation that comes in the midst of the trial.

We've seen that when we're tested, it's our faith that's being tested. **God gives us the trial to show us the strength of the faith that lives within us; that it will withstand everything.** God will bring us through! So based on this, are we going to trust and obey however difficult the situation? Are we going to walk in that faith that He has given us? If we're going to receive the crown of life, we must endure the temptation and withstand the trial. The crown of an abundant life, here and in eternity. God has promised this to *those who love Him*. Do you love God? Let your love express itself through your faithfulness to Him in temptation and in trial.

It is not every man who suffers, that is blessed; but he who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of duty... The tried Christian shall be a crowned one. The crown of life is promised to all who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God, shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, where love is made perfect. (Matthew Henry)

Think on these things: on the poor, the rich, the faith and love that live within you, enduring temptation and withstanding trial, hearing and obeying. The crown of life awaits us!

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK"- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)