

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning, we are going to continue our study through the book of James.

And one of the things that our text is going to cover this morning is – wisdom.

What is wisdom?

Where do we get it?

We are told in the book of Psalms and in the book of Proverbs that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;

Meaning that in order to have true wisdom, we need a relationship with God.

I remember reading about a Christian University that had a very popular course among the students.

The course was titled, “A Survey of the New Testament”

And the reason that it was popular among the students was that there was never any homework, no quizzes, no reading and no tests before the final.

The grade the student received for the class was the grade that they received on their final.

And for 25 years, the same professor had always presented the students with the same question for the final. “Describe the Missionary Journey of Paul”

Now, there was a young jock by the name of “Meathead”, he got into the class. He needed an easy A just to stay in sports.

And a tutor that was assigned to him helped him prepare, all semester long, for the final exam.

When the day of the test came, Meathead was ready.

He knew everything about every journey Paul ever took.

He knew about Philippi and Thessalonica, Rome and Tyre.

He knew about Timothy and Barnabas and Luke. He was ready.

But when the final exam was passed out, students all over that great auditorium were stunned to see a new question.

For the first time in a quarter-century, the professor decided to ask a different question.

Instead of a question about Paul’s missionary journeys, there was this question:

“Critique the Sermon on the Mount that was preached by Jesus.”

The students were shocked –

One of the students got up immediately, took his blue book and slammed it on the professor’s desk – it was empty, he didn’t know how to answer the question.

And then, one by one each one of the other students turned their empty blue book to the professor and walked out of the class.

Every student – except one, Meathead.

Meathead opened up his blue book and started to write.

He wrote and wrote and wrote until he had filled up his blue book and then he got up and turned it in.

That afternoon, the professor had two stacks of blue books.

On his right, a tall stack of empty blue books, all with the grade of F.

On his left, one, single blue book, with a big, bold A+ right on top. It was Meathead's.

The other students were angry – many of them were at the top of their class – they were honor students.

They wondered how this dumb jock answered the question.

So they came to him and asked him.

And he simply said, "Read it"

On the first page was the opening sentence.

"Who am I to criticize the Sermon on the Mount? Instead, let me tell you about the missionary journeys of Paul."

Meathead...had wisdom – his classmates simply had knowledge.

This morning, James is going to encourage us to be like Meathead.

Let's pray...

[Jas 1:5-8 NKJV] 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 [he is] a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

As much as we don't like it – we ought to expect trials if we are a Christian.

None of us really like trials – we don't invite trials.

But, if you are a Christian here this morning, James tells us that trials are inevitable.

We saw that in our study two Sundays ago.

[Jas 1:2 NKJV] 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, When you fall into various trials.

Trials are a normal part of the Christian life.

In fact, if there is any believer here who is not undergoing a trial right now – don't worry because trials are coming.

All who desire to live Godly, will suffer persecution.

They are used to develop us, and grow us.

They are used to develop our faith and bring us to spiritual maturity.

Sometimes, we have the misconception that trials are all about God punishing us – church, that is not true.

Trials produce –

James tells us in verse 3 that trials produce patience –

We pray for patience and then we get upset because God doesn't give us patience quick enough.

Not only do trials produce patience -

Turn with me to Romans 5,

[Rom 5:3-5 NKJV] 3 And not only [that], but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Paul tells us that it is a process – tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces hope.

We may wish to have better character and more hope without starting with tribulations but that is not God's pattern or plan for the believer.

So, if we are going to have to endure trials – we are going to have to know how to respond to trials.

And as we read earlier in verse 2, James has already instructed us to count it all joy –

The question becomes, How do we count it all joy???

James gives us the answer in verse 5,

[Jas 1:5 NKJV] 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James opens up verse five by being very gracious to us –

He doesn't say, hey dummies, you guys all need wisdom.

He says, if any of you lacks wisdom.

It is a very all-encompassing statement because I don't know of many people who are going to say that they do not lack wisdom.

We all need wisdom.

We need to remember that James is writing to the early church that was under constant persecution.

And he knew how they were responding to the persecution.

So he first tells them to count it all joy –

And then he provides them the way that they can count it all joy – and that is through wisdom.

Now, knowledge and wisdom are not the same thing.

Education and wisdom is not the same thing.

Insight and wisdom is not the same thing.

Remember the illustration about Meathead and the other students – the other students had knowledge but Meathead had wisdom.

I can best summarize the difference in that knowledge is the information and wisdom is the application.

Knowledge is information and wisdom is application.

This is the same thing that Jesus taught in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish builder.

Turn with me to the gospel of Luke 6,

[Luk 6:46-49 NKJV] 46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? 47 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 "He is like a man building a house, who

dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

The builder in verse 47, that builder is the wise builder; he applied what Jesus told him.

The builder in verse 49, that builder is the foolish builder: he had knowledge of what Jesus told him but, he chose not to apply it.

In other word, wisdom is the information that God supplied turned into action.

It is knowing how to live God's way in God's world.

Why do we need wisdom when we are going through trials?

Why not ask for strength, or grace, or even deliverance?

For this reason: We need wisdom so we will not waste the opportunities God is giving us to mature.

Wisdom helps us understand how to use these circumstances for our good and God's glory.

Illustration

I read about a church secretary, who had recently suffered a stroke; her husband had been placed in hospice earlier in the month as he was battling pancreatic cancer.

After going home from the hospital, the pastor decided to pay her a visit.

He went up to her bedroom and walked up next to her and reassured her that he was praying for her.

“What are you asking God to do?” she asked,

The pastor replied, “I’m asking God to help you and strengthen you,”

“I appreciate that,” she said, “but pray about one more thing. Pray that I’ll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!”

You see church, she knew the meaning behind James 1:5.

She knew that there was a reason that our Sovereign God was allowing all of this to occur in her life.

And how do we get wisdom???

We ask –

This is a command, not a suggestion by James.

He is telling us exactly what to do. We ask for it.

In the Sermon in the Mount, Jesus challenged us to ask.

Turn with me to Matthew 7,

[Mat 7:7-11 NKJV] 7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Jesus clearly encourages us to ask from God what we need, and this includes wisdom.

I was at Barnes and Nobles this past Thursday and there are so many self-help books – and many of them were in the Christian section.

James 1:5 doesn't say let him ask of books, it says – let him ask of God.

In our prayers with God and in our devotional readings in His Word – we need to be asking for and seeking His wisdom.

We cannot demand, we cannot expect or buy wisdom.

Asking for wisdom implies humility; it acknowledges our lack and need before God.

And when we ask for wisdom, verse 5 states that it will be given to us liberally and without reproach.

To give liberally means that God does not add a condition when giving wisdom.

He gives wisdom openly and sincerely.

God is not going to get upset at us or correct us when we come ask Him for wisdom.

He is not going to say, "It's about time you came asking for wisdom"

We must understand that it is God's will for us to have wisdom.

Solomon asked for wisdom in the Old Testament.

And we must remember that Solomon lived during a time period where if one was looking for wisdom, they would normally find it at the high priest who was equipped with the urim and thummin.

Solomon however, knew that he was able to seek wisdom directly from God.

Turn with me to 1 Kings 3,

[1Ki 3:7-13 NKJV] 7 "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I [am] a little child; I do not know [how] to go out or come in. 8 "And Your servant [is] in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11

Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 "behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 "And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

Solomon realized he had a need and what did he do – he asked God for wisdom and God met that need.

[Jas 1:6 NKJV] 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Not only are we supposed to ask for wisdom, James tells us here in verse 6 how to ask for wisdom and that is by asking for it in faith.

Faith is being willing and ready to follow-through.

It's a willingness to stay the course, to take another step, to try again and again if it's in the direction God has shown.

The word that is used here for doubt can be described in so many ways - It could be guilt, anger, indecision, confusion, disbelief, fear, hesitation, mistrust, reluctance, skepticism, lack of confidence.

He who asks while doubting, is a person who is wishy washy between our loyalty to God and our loyalty to the world.

James makes a comparison to these doubting believers to the waves in the ocean.

Unpredictable!

Up, one minute and down the next minute.

He compares them to a small boat that is being tossed helplessly in the waves.

Church, if this is a characteristic of our Christian life; it is evidence that we are spiritually immature.

That was the problem with the early church in Jerusalem – they couldn't count their trials as joy because they were not seeking God's wisdom – and because of it, they were not growing and allowing themselves to become spiritually unstable.

[Jas 1:7-8 NKJV] 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 [he is] a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

God is anxious to answer prayer if we have faith. Not faith in our faith, but faith in Him.

However, we should not expect anything from the Lord if we don't believe He's going to do what we asked.

I asked you to underline double-minded man,

Being double-minded is when you are saying you have faith, but your actions are motivated by doubt and fear.

Turn with me to the gospel of **Matthew 14**,

Peter is a perfect example of an individual who had faith but, then he showed that some of his actions were motivated by fear and doubt.

[Mat 14:22-32 NKJV] 22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the

water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind [was] boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out [His] hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Not only do we see doubt and fear in Peter's life here but we also see it in the garden of Gethsemane as well as when he denied Jesus three times.

Now, everyone seems to pick on poor Peter.

But the question I have always had is, why didn't the other disciples get out of the boat and walk on the water like Peter did?

Where was there faith?

Peter is the only person other than Jesus to walk on water.

You see, the problem with Peter is that he took his eyes off of Jesus and he focused on the wind and became afraid, that is when he started to sink.

Did Peter have faith? Yes.

But it was a shallow faith.

It was motivated by fear and doubt.

Now, I want to clear up one thing with the issue of doubt.

I don't think that what James is implying here is that if there is anyone who has any form of doubt – that somehow God will not hear their request.

I believe that we all at times go through periods of doubt – even if the period is for an instant.

I believe that James is referring to the individuals who come to God asking for certain things and they really have no intentions in actually doing them.

For example, someone who is involved in fornication – he or she prays for wisdom and the word of God reveals to the person that they should put an end to that relationship.

The person who is asks in doubt is the person who says – nope. I am going to continue to do what I was already doing.

They were never seeking God's wisdom. They were simply trying to seek a blessing.

You see, I think that many times, the reason that we do not ask for wisdom from God is because we already know what He is going to say.

Wisdom is our standard for living the Christian life.

It's foundation is the Word of God, and our knowledge of it is critical.

But, in the end, wisdom is a generous gift received by faith, available to all believers, anytime we ask.

Let's ask for wisdom by faith... It's the way we grow and mature in Christ.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.