

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How to Endure Trials, Part 2

Scripture: James 1:2-12

Code: 90-206

We started last week to look at a wonderful text of Scripture, James chapter 1. James chapter 1 verses 2 through 12, the theme of triumph in trouble. I suppose we could imagine the worst trial we could possibly face in life, come up with a list of potential subjects, financial crisis, for some people maybe the crash of the stock market, losing all their investments, losing their pension, losing their savings, for some people losing Social Security, for some loss of employment, fired from a job with no income to support your family. Perhaps even worse, the announcement from the doctor that you have heart disease, or you have cancer, there is a massive brain tumor, or your wife does, or your husband or your son or your daughter or your grandchild. Perhaps for you it would be the accidental death of a child, or the rape and killing of someone you love, the death of a beloved one in your own family, and so it goes.

These things are frightening to us. And I suppose to one degree or another most people have a hidden lingering fear of that phone call...especially if it's late at night or very early in the morning that announces the unthinkable tragedy.

Such tragedy occurred a week ago today in India. A family, a missionary family. Graham, his wife, Gladys, Staine had served their Lord in India in a ministry that was...that had gone on for 35 years among lepers...devoted themselves to proclaiming the gospel and ministering to people with that terrible disease of leprosy. They had three children, a daughter and two sons.

It was last Sunday that the husband and his two sons were in their car when a mob of a hundred angry anti-Christian radicals assaulted the car, poured gasoline over it and burned him and his two sons to death. They were incinerated right there. His wife and daughter were somewhere else in a house and so escaped that fate.

The Indian government has at this point, at least, rounded up about 50 of the one hundred and they think they know who the ringleader of this action was. It was an activity against those people who attempt to convert Hindu people to the gospel.

What makes the story interesting to us is that this dear family was a part of the Grace To You ministry in India. Since 1985, I guess, in some ways I had been their pastor through the ministry of tapes. This week I will be doing a phone conversation to India to talk with Gladys about this. While she was in a state of shock and was being...at least being questioned by the authorities and the media in

India, she said, "I am deeply hurt but I am not angry because our Lord has told us to forgive our enemies." That was the extent of the interview and they hurried her away for some care.

Now I suppose you can't think of anything more unimaginable than to have your family incinerated by a radical crowd when you have faithfully served the Lord for so many, many years. As we noted last week, we often think back to Job and the horror of his situation. As bad as it was it's so far removed from us it probably doesn't hit like some of the things in our own time.

But if you were to look at the Bible and ask yourself...what is the most unthinkable trauma, what is the deepest tragedy that could occur? Certainly Job would be in that short list of people that top it off, but maybe the severest trial that anybody ever went through as recorded in the Old Testament was faced by a man named Abraham. Now let me just remind you of that.

You remember that Abraham and Sarah were childless. God told him he would be the father of a great nation. His children would be as the sands of the sea. They would be a special people favored by God so that the nations of the earth would be treated by God in response to how they treated Abraham's seed. Through Abraham the world would be blessed. Anybody who cursed his people would be cursed, anybody who blessed his people would be blessed...the great Abrahamic covenant.

They, of course, couldn't have children but God miraculously allowed them to have a son, Isaac. It says in Genesis 22 that after they had had that son and Isaac had grown to young manhood, God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham," and he said, "Here I am." And God said, "Take now your son, your only son whom you love...God is emphasizing all those realities.

To tell us, to let us know how difficult the test was,

"Take your son, Isaac, your only son whom you love, go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." It's just frankly an absolutely incredible test, almost impossible to believe. If Isaac perishes, so do all the Abrahamic promises. If Isaac, all hope of progeny in Abraham's old age is gone, all hope of a people is gone. But the same God who gave the promise and touched the loins of Abraham and Sarah to make it come to pass, that same God now comes and gives a command to slay that very promise itself. Abraham, kill all God's promises...strike a blow at God's covenant faithfulness...kill the word of promise...cut off the line of Messiah...destroy all your own personal hopes.

What made it the severest trial ever is not that Isaac was to die, but that Abraham was to kill him. Unimaginable...to kill the son whom you love. And verse 3 of Genesis 22 says, "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac, his son, and he split wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance and Abraham said

to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey and I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship and return to you.' Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, he carried the wood in which his body was intended to be burned. He took in his hand the fire and the knife, the two of them walked on together." They were walking toward Mount Moriah which is right on the temple mount in Jerusalem today.

"And Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father, and said, 'My father,' and he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering.'" At this point Isaac didn't know that he was to be the sacrifice. Of course, that was a pagan thing, that's another thing that made it so amazing. God was asking him to do what God forbid. "Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together." And I don't think Abraham was lying. I believe that Abraham may well have believed that God would make a provision.

"When they came to the place of which God had told him and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son, Isaac," it must have been a very confusing experience for Isaac. "Laid him on the altar on the top of the wood. Abraham went so far as to stretch out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Lifted the knife. This is...this is obedience at any cost. This is worship at the supreme level, contradicting everything that was in his heart, everything that was in his mind, indescribably, unimaginably painful. And yet that's what God had said.

Verse 11, "The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham,' and he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, do nothing to him for now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.'" Wow. Abraham shows, listen, that we may be tested in people and things nearest and dearest to us even like a member of the family. We may have to offer up our own Isaac. Be willing to give the ones we love over to the Lord, not only in death some day, but in life as well. Abraham was willing to give up Isaac. And when he was willing to give up Isaac, he showed that he had the right to keep him. He would not be possessive of that son, but he would release him to God's will.

That's a test. There are some parents who don't even want their children to go into the ministry. There are some parents who don't want their children to go to a foreign mission field. There are some parents who don't want their children to leave town...even though they may be pressed in their hearts by divine compulsion. But no matter what trial we might have, it could never be like this, to be asked to kill your own child.

It must be said, however, that the more difficult the obedience is, the more excellent it is. The more self-denial that is required, the more genuine faith is exhibited. And Abraham passed the test. I know that you fear God, verse 12 says, you passed the test.

Turn to Hebrews 11 for a moment because in Hebrews 11 we have a New Testament commentary on the story. Hebrews 11:17, the writer of Hebrews says, "By faith...and some great faith it was...Abraham when he was tested offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son, it was he to whom it was said in Isaac your descendants shall be called." And then in verse 19, "He considered though that God is able to raise men even from the dead." There's an insight.

The key is Abraham was willing to do whatever God asked him to do. He believed God, even to the point that if as he suspected it might happen, and it did happen, if God had not provided another animal...you remember there was a ram in the thicket that was substituted for Isaac...even if God had not provided an animal and he had had to go through slaying Isaac, God is able to raise the dead. He had that confidence in God.

In fact, some have conjectured that he was actually anxious to see a miracle of resurrection and may have been slightly disappointed to find a ram in the thicket. I doubt it...I doubt it. But that kind of faith certainly on a human level, that kind of obedience is supreme. I don't know of any other biblical obedience that can surpass that. That is why we find in Galatians chapter 3 verse 6, "Even so Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham."

In other words, Abraham set the standard. He is the symbol of faith. He is the model of faith. He believed against all hope that a child could be born. He believed against all reason and human nature that if need be God could raise the dead. And he passed the test of faith and he feared God. He sets the standard for us.

Life is going to have its trials and its troubles and its losses. That takes us back to our text in James. Let's look at verse 2. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach and it will be given to him, but let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position and let the rich man 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. Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial for once he has been approved, that is having passed the test, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him."

Now I know that most people dream of a world of ease. We long for a life of perfect comfort. And we seek only minimal trials. And I think our momentary exemption, our momentary relief from trials makes us think that maybe it will always be that way. But it won't. It reminds me of Psalm 30 verse 6, where the psalmist says, "In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved." When I was in the midst of my prosperity I imagined that it would always be that way and nothing could shake me.

Well people who think like that live in a fool's paradise. People who never forecast trouble, who promise themselves only ease are living in an unreal world. Thomas Manton(?), a Puritan writer, said, "God has only one Son without sin, but He has none without suffering."

Trials come to us from God, He allows them and He has manifold purposes. But the primary purpose that we see addressed in Abraham's case and in the case of what James says is to test the strength of our faith. That's right, to test the strength of our faith. In 2 Chronicles 32 and 31 it, Hezekiah is being addressed and it says, "God left him to test him that he might know all that was in his heart."

Trials in life are a test. They test our humility, don't they? They test whether or not we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. They test whether we have some imaginary idea that...that we're so good God should never have to chasten us. Trials in life also test our affection for worldly things. They test whether or not we are succumbing to earthly treasure. When earthly things are ripped out of our grasp we found out whether or not we are worldly.

Tests in life, trials in life, suffering, pain and sorrow, loss, also tests whether or not we are heavenly minded...whether or not we really live with an eternal perspective. And trials in life also test what we really love.

All of these things, they test the strength, the character of our faith, they test our humility whether we can take suffering willingly because we know we deserve nothing more. They test whether we are engulfed by worldly things. They test whether we have our affections set on things above. They test what we really love.

Look at the case of Abraham, was there anything dearer to Abraham than Isaac? Yes. Who was dearer to Abraham than Isaac? God...God. And the test revealed who Abraham loved most. He loved Isaac, it says that. But he loved God more.

And trials in life test how we value divine grace. What do you mean by that? What I mean by that is are we willing to suffer in order to experience grace in abundant measure? Our senses tells us to value pleasure, to value what makes us happy. Faith teaches us to value God and His work. Sense tells us to value earthly security, earthly protection, earthly support. Faith tells us to value divine grace poured out in the midst of suffering. It's like the song said, "If I didn't have any problems, I'd

never know that He could solve them. I'd miss all that grace."

Psalm 63:3 the psalmist summed it up by saying, speaking to God, "Your lovingkindness, Your chesed, Your mercy, Your grace is better than life." The sweetest thing you'll ever know is His grace.

But in the summing of all of that and the theme of James 1 is that trials are designed by God to test us and strengthen us. That's what they do. And that's good, that's good. Again, Thomas Manton wrote, "While all things are quiet and comfortable, we live by sense rather than faith, as the worth of a soldier is never known in times of peace," end quote.

True character comes out in the midst of the test. And so, we have trials. They're inevitable. We are fallen creatures in a fallen world. Not only do we just have to endure the normal result of sin in the universe, sin on the planet and sin in us, but that is added to by the fact that God Himself brings and allows trials in our life for the purpose of testing us and strengthening us.

Now, in the passage I just read there are some practical matters for consideration. If I am to pass the test, if I am to gain from it, if I am to come out stronger through it, if I am to overcome, endure and persevere, what is required? That's the question we started to answer last Sunday.

First of all, verse 2, a joyous attitude...a joyous attitude. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." That's the first thing, and we addressed that last time.

Secondly, an understanding mind. Verse 3, "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." Understand what God is doing. He's making you stronger. He's producing endurance. He's making you more formidable, strengthening your faith and your usefulness.

And so, we respond to our trials with a joyous attitude and with an understanding mind, and then, lastly, last time, a submissive will. Verse 4, "Let endurance have its perfect result." Don't fight it. Let the test do what God wants it to do that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. It's all a part of your spiritual maturation. It's all a part of your spiritual development. It's a part of growing up...whether it's an illness or a loss of a loved one, whether it's having your husband and your two sons incinerated by a mad mob of God-hating agents of darkness, whether it's a loss of a job, whatever it is...your first initial approach is an attitude of joy because you know that God works all thing together...all things together for...what?...for your good.

The second thing is an understanding mind, to realize that this is all about your development, it's all to produce endurance. You know, one of the curses of being young is you haven't had enough trial. Somebody said to me, and I assume it was a compliment, I certainly took it that way, if it wasn't don't come up and say that. Somebody said to me, "It seems as though as you get older your preaching is more compassionate and more pastoral."

Well I'll tell you, as you get older, you have been passed through more trials. And either they harden you and make you bitter, or they teach you greater patience, greater endurance and greater spiritual strength. I pray, God, that's true.

A joyous attitude, an understanding mind and a submissive will. Now let me talk about a couple more. Number four, a believing heart...a believing heart.

At this point somebody might say, "Well, boy, I'd like to have a joyous attitude, I'd like to have an understanding mind, this is all for my good and God's doing all of this, I'd like to be able to let it happen and just...just be comfortable and just rest in God's purposes. You notice with Abraham, no argument, no muss, no fuss, God said to do it and he just packed up and went off to do it. I'd like to be able to be that submissive and that understanding, and to maintain joy in the midst of my trials, but I lack something. I lack the spiritual insight. I struggle to keep my heart fixed on joy in this. I struggle to really understand why this has to happen and I...I struggle to be submissive. I need deeper understanding. I need spiritual wisdom. I need to know more so that I'm not so perplexed and so weak."

And that takes us to verses 5 through 8. In the midst of this, if that's you and you're struggling to maintain joy, understanding and submission, verse 5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom..." Let's stop there.

What is wisdom? I'm not talking about some philosophical concepts here. When we talk about wisdom, all we're talking about is a practical understanding of the issues of life...a practical understanding of the issues of life. And listen, wisdom is at its premium during trials.

The Jews sought that kind of wisdom. When you read the Psalms, you read Proverbs, you read Ecclesiastes, you know that they were enamored with wisdom. But the only thing that ever really sorted out life was the wisdom of God, which you find in Proverbs and Psalms. And when you look at the wisdom of man in the book of Ecclesiastes, all is vanity, right? All is futility. All is nothing. We don't want some...some ethereal concept, some detached philosophy. What we want is a practical understanding of the issues of life so that we can sort out what's going on and why it's going on.

To the Jews, very different than the Greeks, to the Jews wisdom was understanding life in view of God.

In the midst of all that was going on, it was to see it as God at work. The psalmist said, "I have set the Lord always before me, therefore my heart is glad, my joy...my glory rejoices." Hard to be depressed when you're viewing life always as involving God and His unfolding purposes.

When you're going through a test and you feel weak and you desire strength and resources and understanding, and you're trying to hold on, where do you go for wisdom? Well you could run off to the psychologist, I guess. You could run off to the psychiatrist. Or you could even go have your horoscope read. Or you could call those terrible phone numbers where they purport to be able to tell you everything about yourself. You could look to the world to try to find wisdom.

But there's a wonderful, wonderful statement that you probably ought to know. It's more than a statement and it's found, I think it's the twenty-eighth...sure about this...of Job, and the question is asked, verse 12, "Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man doesn't know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living." Well that's good, you want wisdom, don't look in this world...forget it.

Boy, that is pretty serious to say that. It is not available in the land of the living. That means this world. The deep says, "Hey, it's not in me. You're not going to find it by putting on scuba gear or going in a submarine. The sea says it's not in me. And pure gold can't be given in exchange for it. And silver can't be weighed as its price. It can't be valued in the gold of Ophir and precious onyx or sapphire, gold or glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for articles of fine gold."

It doesn't matter how wealthy you are, it doesn't matter deep you can plumb the depth of the sea. It doesn't matter how much fortune you have, you can't buy it. "The topaz of Ethiopia can't equal it. You can't be valued in pure gold. Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living." It is not available on the planet. It's not here. You will never sort out the issues of life by seeking to understand it on a human level.

"It is hidden from the eyes of all living, it is concealed from the birds of the sky." No matter how far you fly up you won't find it. "Abaddon and death say with our ears we heard about it. No matter how deep into the belly of the earth you go, you won't find it." Verse 23, "God understands its way and He knows its place."

Verse 28, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." You don't even enter into the realm of wisdom until you come to God. That's where you're going to find wisdom. It's not in this world. You're never going to be able to sort out of the issues of life by looking for human solutions.

Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own...what?...understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, He'll make your path straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord." Now there is wisdom for every situation, there is wisdom to be grasped in every trial in life. It's not available, however, from any human source.

Go over to chapter 3 of James, verse 17, and we may have to do a third message on this, but that's okay. Three-seventeen, cause I want you to understand this, "But the wisdom from above," now there's the point, you just need to sort of underline that, "The wisdom from above..." It's not in the land of the living. It's not available on earth. It isn't here. It's not human. It comes down from above. It is pure wisdom. It is peaceable. It is gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Now any wisdom that doesn't come down from above, verse 15, the wisdom is not that which comes down from above, anything other than that is earthly, natural and demonic. Wow...

So, you're going through a trial, you're going through a struggle and you're trying to sort it out and you're asking questions about why is this happening. Why is it going on? Questions like Job asked. And you're wondering how you can grasp it. How can you get an understanding of the issues of life that effect you?

Solomon knew how important this was. First Kings 3, he was given the opportunity to ask anything from God, what did he ask for? Wisdom and/or an understanding heart.

So let's go back to James chapter 1. You're going to get thrown in to trial after trial after trial in life as God in His wonderful purposes is testing your faith and strengthening you and refining you and finding out whether you're attached to earthly things, finding out whether your heavenly minded, finding out what you really love. God is going to be bringing all these things into your life and through them strengthening and making you, as He says in verse 4, perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. In the midst of all of this, you're struggling to get a grip on why it's all happening. All you feel is the pain. And sometimes it's chastening for sins in your life and it's grievous for the moment. And you're wondering, "How can I get an understanding? How can I get a grasp on what is going on?" And the first answer that Scripture gives you is it's not available in the earthly realm. All the wisdom of this world is either natural or demonic. It has to come down from above.

So, when you need wisdom...go back to verse 5...if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of whom? Of God. In fact, that's a command. That's a present-active imperative, it's not optional, it's mandatory and it's continual. In all those times when you can't sort out the issues of life, you ask God.

I really believe that this is one of the primary reasons why God brings trials into life, in order to elevate our dependence. Just when you think you've got it all wired, right? Just when you think that you're the master of your own fate, you've got your life sorted out, you've got your kids where you think you want them to be, you've got your life partner committed to you, you've succeeded in your career goals and your achievements and you're happy with your lifestyle and you like the way life is, it's that very kind of dependence, that very kind of prosperity about which God warned Israel when they went into the land of milk and honey and had it good, they would forget Him and there would have to come a

series of reminders. And one of the things that trials do to us is put us in a position where no human resources can solve the problem.

As you know, it was a couple of weeks ago that my mother died. It wouldn't be what we chose and my Dad has said to me a half a dozen times, if she died a year from now it still would be too soon, if she died two years from now, it still would be too soon, if she died five years from...if she died before I go, it would always be too soon. And there's a helplessness because you can't do anything about it.

When somebody beloved in your family gets cancer, you can't do anything about it ultimately. Oh, you can take whatever medical options you have and do everything that science has provided for us in its wonderful ability to prolong life, but in the end...in the end it's the character and nature of that disease that determines the life or death of that individual and it's really out of our hands.

It's when you get to those places where your children have abandoned, as we heard in the testimony of that young lady tonight, you've done everything you could to share the gospel with them, to pour into them the truth of God and they walk away from it into a life of sin, and you're helpless...you can't do anything about it, that you have nowhere to go but to God. And that's good, isn't it? That's good...that's good.

You are left only with an invisible means of support. And so it says in verse 5, "If you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." And you might say, "Well, boy, I need wisdom in this situation, what am I going to have to do to get it out of God? Do I have to sort of beat on heaven's door?"

Well just look at the rest of the verse. "Let him ask of God who gives to all men...what?...generously." He gives to all men liberally, haplos, unconditionally, without bargaining, generously, freely. He just pours it out. He holds back nothing, absolutely nothing.

Proverbs 2:6, "The Lord gives wisdom, from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright." He just has piles and piles of it. And He loves nothing more than to dispense it to those of His children who ask. This is talking about prayer here. It's talking about the pursuit of the knowledge of God in the Scripture. Listen to Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope, then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me and I will listen to you and you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, declares the Lord...I love this...and I will restore your fortunes." God is not reluctant. He gives liberally. When you go through the trials of life, God is there to provide all the necessary wisdom if you'll just go to Him.

And another thing. He gives to all men generously and without reproach. The old King James said, "Upbraideth not." Let me tell you what that means. I don't know about you but I have had this kind of

conversation, I suppose with my own parents and with my own children. The kids come and they ask for something. And they haven't been as obedient as you would wish they had been, and you want to give them what they ask for because it's necessary and you give them a little speech about...Well, look, I'm giving this to you but you don't deserve it, but because I care about you and because I think it's necessary, I'm giving it to you but I really shouldn't do it.

Now that's giving with reproach, isn't it? Aren't you glad you don't get that kind of stuff when you go to God? There's no reproach...no reproach.

Verse 17 says, "Everything good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above and it comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." He gives sincerely. He gives without hesitation. Listen, He gives without mental reservation. He gives holding back nothing. He doesn't begrudge. He doesn't complain like parents do. He doesn't say, "You know, this is getting a little much. All I ever do is bail you out." His commitment is to supply all of the necessary wisdom that His people need to deal with the issues of life and give it generously to the fullest and never at any point with reproach. We don't have to hear that speech that we heard from our father, "You're not worthy of this...you're undeserving." He gives it. Gives to all men generously, that being those who are His, without any reproach it will be given to him.

I mean, that is a really marvelous promise. If you're going through a trial, you're trying to sort it out, you go to the Word, you go to the Lord in prayer and you ask Him for wisdom and wisdom is poured out to you, without reservation and without reproach. I love what it says in Psalm 81:10, "I the Lord am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt...listen to the next line...open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Don't you like that? That's how God is. He doesn't say, "Here's a morsel, you undeserving wretch." He says, "Open your mouth as wide as you can and I'm about to dump a load in it."

This is really calling us to find our resources above, to a life of prayer, going to God as the source of everything we need in the midst of all our trials. It's Mark 14:38, "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation...keep praying, keep praying...keep seeking God so that your trials don't fall into a temptation and a consequent sin."

Look at verse 6 then. "But in this asking, let him ask in faith...let him ask in faith," and this is why the fourth principle here that I identified for you is a believing heart. A joyous attitude, an understanding mind, a submissive will and a believing heart. "Let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind."

If you're going to pray, pray believing. Having described the willing Father in verse 5. he turns to the waiting child in verse 6 and describes the kind of faith that is required. If there's a lack of wisdom in your life, if you can't sort out of the issues of life, if you can't deal with the traumas and the struggles

and the trials, if you can't handle all of that, it is not the fault of the Father. There is no shortness in His supply, it is the faith of the child that is the issue.

What does he mean here, ask in faith without any doubting? He's simply defining true faith, true faith, the real stuff, the stuff that belongs to believers. Anybody, Hebrews 11:6 says, who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. You've got to believe that God is a saving, redeeming, gracious, rewarding God. There's no place for insincere praying, for doubting praying.

He says, "The true believer in the trial will cast himself on God's resources with genuine faith that God will supply." That's the faith of a true believer. Further he says, "Without any doubting...without wavering...without disputing...without debating." You're not doubting God's power, you're not doubting God's supply. This, by the way, is not so much the doubt of intellectualism as the doubt of personal commitment. If you have a true faith, an unwavering faith, you believe God is your Savior, God is your Father, God is sovereign, God is loving, and God meets the needs of His own...Philippians 4:19, "My God shall supply all your needs." We believe that...we believe that. True Christians believe that.

A praying believer then asks God, he seeks God and he asks God, never doubting the nature of God, never doubting the love of God, never doubting the fatherhood of God, never doubting that God is his Savior, that God is his guardian, that God is his supply and his provider, never doubting that. That's the kind of faith that the Jews said would move mountains, which was a metaphor for doing difficult things. That's the kind of faith that is described as mustard seed, it starts small but it grows large. It's an increasing kind of faith, persistent, increasing faith lined up with the nature of God. You pray and you really believe that God can and will provide.

But if you doubt, verse 6, you waver, you're like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. What is this talking about? Well, it's pretty obvious. You've seen the surf and you've seen the wind and it just surges and billows and the restless sea just moves back and forth with its endless tides. And if you notice, it doesn't get anywhere. It's like halting between two opinions, like those who couldn't decide whether Jehovah was God or Baal was God in 1 Kings 18. It's like those in 1 Corinthians 10 who sacrificed to demons in a pagan altar, and then went to the church service and took communion. It's like those lukewarm people in the church at Laodicea that God spit out of His mouth. This is the person who has no real faith in God. This is a person who is either an unbeliever or a weak, doubting Christian acting like an unbeliever. "That person, verse 7, that man, let him not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord."

God is not bound to answer doubters. If you're going to debate God, if you're going to doubt God's supply, God's provision, God's love, God's care, God's sovereignty, when the test comes and you go to God but you go faithlessly to God, don't expect to receive any wisdom because verse 8 says, "A

double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Double-minded, dipsuchos, two-souled, s-o-u-l-e-d, two-souled, or two-minded, a soul divided between God and the world. James 4:4, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." "If any man love the world, 1 John 2:15, the love of the Father is not in him." This double-minded man is a...is a term that is primarily referred to an unbeliever because in verse 8 of chapter 4, James 4:8, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners," always used in the New Testament of unbelievers, "purify your hearts, you double-minded, be miserable and mourn and weep," talking to sinners.

Double-minded people have sort of an external commitment to religion, to Christianity, to God, but it's not true devotion, it's not true salvation. I suppose as I said earlier, there are some believers who could have moment when they acted like an unbeliever with that kind of doubt, but the idea here is of one who has not made a complete commitment to God. John Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress called this person Mr. Facing Both Ways.

Psalms 12:2 speaks of a double heart which the Lord will judge. The real clear verse that directs us to a single heart, as we read this morning, Deuteronomy 6:5, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might."

This is the undecided person. A person who knows there's God, believes in God, but hasn't made a commitment. He's unstable not in some of his ways, but in...what?...all of his ways, which indicates his spiritual condition is generally outside the kingdom. He can't handle the trials of life, he's just blown all over the place. He's just battered around by the storms of life. And he would like to come to God to be able to sort it out but he hasn't made enough of a commitment to God, he doesn't have that genuine true and saving faith, or if indeed a believer could fall into this category, he's slipped so far as to be acting like a non-believer and God does not reward doubt. This person has no true trust, no true loyalty to the Lord. His whole life is vacillating, vacillating, vacillating. He is akatastatos, unsettled. It's used in 1 Corinthians 14:33 where it says, "God is not the author of confusion." This is the confused person, hasn't yet come. It's the restless person of James 3:8. This person isn't settled.

So listen carefully, folks. If you are going through the trials of life and you have not made a commitment to God by putting your trust and faith in Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, if your faith is not that saving faith that embraces all that God is and all that God promises, and you're struggling in the midst of trials with your duplicity and your doubt and your restlessness and your wavering and your vacillation, don't expect God to deliver to you the necessary wisdom to sort out the issues of life. The wisdom that is from above comes only to those who are God's children.

And as a footnote, if you are a confused believer, if you are stumbling and bumbling around in some pattern of sin and trying to reach out in the midst of a trial for wisdom without dealing with that sin, don't expect God to honor that duplicity and hypocrisy.

Now if we are going to receive from God wisdom, we need to ask...we need to ask in faith. A joyful attitude, an understanding mind, a submissive will, a believing heart, there's one more for next time. Want to know what it is? Come next time. Let's pray.

I say that cause I might change it before then. No, I wouldn't do that.

Father, life is filled with so many struggles and we need so much, this great hope and confidence that's provided in Your Word, we pray for dear Gladys Staine and her young daughter in the terrible, terrible loss of her faithful and beloved husband and two precious young boys, I think they were nine and seven, and I just pray, Lord, for that peace that passes understanding to reign in her heart...and the heart of her daughter. Thank You for the evident grace that was demonstrated in her response to that. I pray that there will be a wisdom abounding delivered to her in the midst of this so that she can have a joyous attitude, even in the center of the most unimaginable sorrow. And, Father, for all the issues of life that all of us face and will face, grant to us this triumphant approach, give us an attitude of joy, an understanding mind. Lord, help us...help us to see things to the point where we can exercise a submissive will, and for what we can't grasp, a believing heart that comes to You in honest single-minded prayer and seeks from You the wisdom needed...with the confidence that You'll give it generously, without scolding us, You'll grant everything we need. And by our trials, Lord, You will bring us to strength and maturity and usefulness. And once we have suffered a while here, You will have made us strong to the greater glory of our Savior...and we pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

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