

James

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish

October 19, 2022



James 1:5-11

Vss. 5-8

- In James' letter there is a logical progression. In the opening verses he tells the churches that if they have faith, then that faith produces endurance and as that faith-fueled endurance continues through persecutions and trials, then we find God has molded us to be perfect as He is perfect. But what about wisdom? If I am being pressed toward this perfection, should I not have wisdom that reflects this perfection?
- For James, such wisdom has two branches: one that helps us know the deep things of God and one that informs our day-to-day life, and it is the former that feeds the latter. In other words, the more wisdom I gain so that I better and better understand God, the more I will understand how to live a Christ-like life, especially when it comes to how I relate to others, both in the church and on the outside.
- No matter what we need or what we seek, the disciple should always go to God. The same is true for wisdom. There is a wisdom that God gives to believers that the greatest university cannot match. As we ask God for the wisdom we need to reflect His mind in our lives, we must remember two things. First, God gives generously and "without reproach". Tim Keller's wonderful book, "The Prodigal God" points us toward how God is forever generous. Keller points out that the word "prodigal" means "to spend or give lavishly". The parable is tagged as it is because the boy in the story spent his father's money in such a way. But Keller points out that in the whole of the story it is the Father, not the younger son, who is the most lavish in his giving. Jesus wants us to know that this is how God is. God gives without expecting anything in return, unconditionally. He causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on the good and the evil (Matthew 5:45). And He gives without holding it against us. I had old time school teacher relatives who expected a thank you note for every small gift. Now a thank you note is a fine thing to offer, but I could never tell if they gave the gift just so they would be praised. Was it my birthday or their generosity that was being celebrated? With God there are no such questions. God gives freely and lavishly because it is His nature to do so! God is love and love cannot help but give.
- Second, we must be mindful of *HOW* we ask, for if we ask while filled with doubt why should we expect to be answered? James says such a man who doubts God yet asks for God's divine power is like the surf of the sea, driven by whatever direction the wind is blowing. The word he uses is

“*dipsuchos*”, which literally means a person with two souls or two minds inside them. The two rage against each other, as one part believes and the other disbelieves.

- The same faith, then, that fuels our endurance through life’s trials and pain is the same faith required to fully experience all that God desires to give. Jesus said that whatever we ask *in His name*, God will give (John 14:13-14). To ask in the name of Christ is to ask with full faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:22).

Vss. 9-11

- Without using the word “perfection”, James returns to the idea of God giving each person exactly what they need. The poor person looked down upon by society learns self-respect and wealthy who are praised by society learns humility.
- In Christianity, from the very beginning, the poor learn of their priceless value. The poor in the church learn they matter here when they may not matter anywhere else. There were no class distinctions in the early church. A poor man may sit next to the richest man in town. The poor man may well be the pastor. The poor also learn they in the Kingdom of God they have a vital purpose. Even the most limited can pray to encourage the people of the church and render an enormous service to the church. Most of all, the poor learn that they matter to God. For God so loved the poorest of the poor that He gave His only begotten Son...just as He gave Him for you and me.
- 2000 years later society still moans that there are two sets of rules: one for the rich and one for everyone else. In a church relatively free of society’s influences this would not be the case. Indeed, God gives as we need and the wealthy often need to be humbled and to have their priorities rearranged. Donald Trump is pretty rich. How much did he spend on security even before he ran for president? My Florida ancestors probably felt pretty secure in all their land holdings in North Florida, but they lost virtually everything in the Great Depression. Like flowering grass in a scorching desert wind, it’s all too quickly gone (Isaiah 40:6-7; Psalm 103:15). Here within God’s Kingdom, here in the church, the rich learn to lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can destroy (Matthew 6:19-21).