

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES – SERMON 3

THE WAY TO WISDOM

James 1:5-8

INTRODUCTION

- A lack of wisdom results in wrong decisions and wrong actions, which can result in tragedy
- From verse 5, James is still speaking of trials (temptations) right through to verse 12 where he says, *“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.”*
- The need for wisdom in verse five, in context, tells us that when trials come, it is a critical time for us to seek the wisdom of God in dealing with them
- Verse four ends, “wanting nothing”, verse five begins, “if any of you lack wisdom”, wanting and lack are from the same Greek word
- God’s design is that we lack nothing, but if we lack wisdom, we need to recognise it and come before God and ask him for it
- Christians often make wrong decisions when they are experiencing tough times
- We need wisdom at all times, but especially in trials

Consider four truths concerning Godly wisdom and how we may obtain it:

I. WISDOM’S DEFINITION

A. What is wisdom?

1. “The right use or exercise of knowledge; the choice of laudable ends, and of the best means to accomplish them. This is wisdom in act, effect, or practice. If wisdom is to be considered as a faculty of the mind, it is the faculty of discerning or judging what is most just, proper and useful, and if it is to be considered as an acquirement, it is the knowledge and use of what is best, most just, most proper, most conducive to prosperity or happiness.” (Webster)

2. The Greek word *sophia* indicates a practical use of knowledge
3. Wisdom is the principal thing in life and more valuable than all precious commodities (Job 28:12-19; Proverbs 4:7; 8:11; 16:16)

B. Wisdom and knowledge are not the same

1. Knowledge refers to the accumulation of information and education
2. Knowledge helps you make a living, but wisdom helps you make a life
3. There are many “educated fools” in the world
4. Old age is no guarantee of wisdom (Job 32:9)
5. “Education without instruction in religious and moral principles will merely result in a race of clever devils” (Earl of Shaftsbury)
6. The simplest child of God is wiser than most educated doctor if he is not saved (Psalms 14:1)
7. As prophesied, in these last days, “knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4)
8. But such knowledge without God’s wisdom is of no eternal value (Romans 1:22)

II. WISDOM’S DEFICIENCY (5)

A. We lack wisdom

1. Those who profess to have knowledge only prove they know nothing (1 Corinthians 8:2)
2. Lack of wisdom leads to poor judgment, bad choices and suffering as a consequence
3. Abraham Lincoln said “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day”

B. We need wisdom

1. To perceive God’s ways

- a. God is infinitely wise and his ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33)
 - b. Yet we are encouraged to ask, “Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths” (Psalm 25:4)
 - c. And we are promised that if we trust in him, he will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6)
2. To pursue God’s will
- a. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:17)
 - b. We are to be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9)
 - c. This knowledge of God’s will comes to those who live a separated life (Romans 12:2)
3. To perform God’s work (Colossians 1:9-11)

III. WISDOM’S DERIVATION (5)

- A. God is the giver of wisdom (Proverbs 2:6; Colossians 2:3; James 3:17)
- 1. The holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15; Psalm 19:7)
 - 2. The holy saints (Proverbs 12:15; 11:14)
 - 3. The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13)
- B. God is generous in giving wisdom
- 1. God “giveth to all men liberally” (James 1:5)
 - 2. He deals bountifully with his children
 - 3. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)
- C. God is gracious in giving wisdom
- 1. He “upbraideth not” (James 1:5)

2. This means he does not reproach or punish those who humbly come to him

IV. WISDOM'S DOORWAY

A. The request to God (5)

1. This is an exhortation to pray earnestly and expectantly
2. As king Solomon prayed, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3:9-10), so we should make his prayer our own (Matthew 7:7-11; 1 John 5:14-15)

B. The reliance upon God (6-7)

1. The prayer for wisdom is qualified by one necessary accompaniment – faith
2. Faith stands firm, but doubt causes us to sink (Matthew 14:28-31)
3. The doubter is double minded, and has a life characterised by instability (8)

CONCLUSION

1. Those who would have wisdom must come to God in reverence and fear (Job 28:28)
2. Wisdom begins with fearing God, continues with trusting God, and ends with obeying God.
3. At what stage are you?
4. When the next trial comes your way, in all your prayers for grace and deliverance, remember to beseech the Lord for wisdom to navigate the trial according to God's perfect will