

"Faith and Wisdom II"

James 1:5-8

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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. 6 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. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (Jas 1:5-8)

Before the Easter holidays, I began to try to unpack the injunction in these verses: that God is the Author of wisdom and He is not stingy in the granting of His gifts. But faith is the instrument by which all good things come to us from God. It is my purpose to show how securely wisdom is linked to faith and faith is linked to wisdom. Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Faith is linked to wisdom just as surely as faith is linked to Jesus Christ. We do not have Christ without faith and without Jesus Christ we have no wisdom.

An important way to look at the book of James is this: it is the wisdom literature of the New Testament and makes the very strong connection between faith and wisdom. Just as Proverbs begins by the praise of wisdom, so James begins by calling us to the seeking of wisdom and connects it to faith.

Several weeks ago, I used the nine principles of wisdom that are stated in Proverbs 16. Tonight I would consider the necessity for faith and the folly that comes with unbelief by looking at another Old Testament passage, Isaiah 29, which we read a few moments ago. You should have your Bibles open and follow me in the examination of this passage; it is surprisingly up to date.

Because God is one, there is uniformity in the way that man sins against Him. The sins of one generation are very similar to sins of another generation. We will find surprising similarities in every age, and we can learn a great deal from what is recorded in the Bible about Israel. These things are written for our admonition, as we read in 1Corinthians 10.

Because God does not change, the nature of sin does not change. The Ten Commandments are as still in effect and are the measure of whether or not we are telling the truth when we say we love God and love our neighbor.

There are three things in this chapter: The anger and destruction that comes upon Jerusalem; the sins that bring that anger; and the promise of Messiah to those who believe

and are wise. I will look at these things and make applications as I go.

I. The sudden and terrible destruction: vs. 1-12.

A. The physical destruction: These sudden calamities are common in the world.
Vs. 1-8

1. The city would be besieged and they would be brought very low, as someone whose face was ground into the dust. Vs. 1-4

2. Their enemies would be as the dust and as chaff . vs. 5

3. There would be physical destruction from thunder, earthquake, great noise of storm and tempest and fire. Vs. 6

4. This would be a personal calamity brought by God himself as a punishment upon Israel. The instruments that God would use would be their enemies the Babylonians and the elements of the natural world: wind, earthquake, thunder, fire.

5. It would come suddenly, like a very bad dream vs. 7-8

a) A sudden dream that comes in the night, completely unexpected. It would seem to be a dream, but it would not be.

b) The reality would be harsh and very cruel

c) The dream would be the dream of eating when there was no food; of drinking when there was nothing to drink.

d) Their dreams would seem more real to them than the reality. The reality would be worse than their worst dreams.

B. The spiritual destruction. Spiritual destruction had some before the physical destruction. This is always the case. Vs. 9-12

1. Stop and think!!!! These are words of mockery. They cannot stop and they cannot think. In line with Proverbs 1:

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me

early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. (Pr 1:24-30)

2. "Blind yourselves and be blind." NKJ There is a play on words here. Cannot be translated. KJ says "Cry ye out, and cry" The party goes on; the drunken riot and cry out, oblivious to everything; they are willfully stupid and crazy with riot and hate and fear. They are like drunken men, but they have not drunken wine nor taken drugs.

3. Their minds are darkened as drunken men; all wisdom has been taken away. Vs. 9,10 There are worse things to be drunken on than alcohol; there are worse drugs than pot and crack;

4. The minds of their wise men have been darkened and they sleep the sleep of folly and rebellion. This is the reason the apostle says:

Ro 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

1Co 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

Eph 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

5. Just because you have peace of mind does not mean that you have peace with God. The wise men of Israel had peace of mind; they were sound asleep mentally and spiritually, sleeping the sleep of those marked for quick and eternal damnation. Their reason was asleep; their consciences slept; their emotions could not be stirred even though horrible horror was at their doorstep.

6. God's revelation became completely removed from their understanding. Vs. 11,12

a) It is sealed to the learned because of unbelief. They ever learned, but never came to the knowledge of the truth. The bible was a puzzle book to them, filled with contradictions; subjected to all manner of interpretations imposed upon it; making its precepts void. This is what Jesus said when He came: you have made void the law of God by your traditions: God had not required a great thing of them. As Moses had said in Deuteronomy 30:

11 For this commandment which I command thee this day,

it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

b) It is closed to the unlearned. The learned have imposed a sense of inferiority upon the unlearned, as if only they could know the book. The unlearned were shut out of the conversation. You CAN know the Bible; you CAN and MUST read and know the Bible. It is a short book. It is desperately important that you learn it and love it.

II. The sins that brought punishment upon Jerusalem. Vs. 13-16.

A. The spiritual idolatry: substituting the precepts of men; vs. 13,

1. Hypocrisy, because they pretend they are doing what they have always done: worshipping God. They pretend with their mouths and lips, but their hearts are far.

2. They substitute their own precepts for the words of God. Because the book is closed they make up their own rules in terms of their misunderstanding of the words of the book. They think they do what the book says, but they are blind as moles, straining at gnats and swallowing camels. They are described in vs. 20, 21: They watch for iniquity; the scorn; they make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for the reprover, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought, for nothing. 3. They have no faith, so they impose their own precepts.

B. The spiritual judgment. Vs. 14-16

1. God takes wisdom and understanding from them. Vs.14

2. They dig deep to hide their works from God--to hide their counsels. They did holes for themselves that they cannot get out of. Even as they dig their spiritual and mental holes to hide from God, so God will expose their folly.

3. They reverse their relationship with God: they act as though they were the potter and could shape God into whatever form they want to. They would reverse the order of reality and make themselves the potter and God the clay. What does God mean to you? What does the Bible mean to you? What does it matter what it means to you? **WHAT DOES IT MEAN!!!** That's the reality that you and I must deal with; me as well as you. It doesn't matter what I think; it doesn't matter what you think. It says what it says and we both must answer to God for it.

4. They act as if God had no understanding. Because they have no understanding, they think that God has no understanding.

III. The glorious promise to the faithful: 17-24. We will have time only to trace--you can read and understand; it is not sealed.

A. Remember, these prophecies are given to a mixed people: the elect and non-elect. God does not forget his faithful ones even in the midst of calamities. Just as He delivered Lot from Sodom; Noah and his family from the flood; Abraham from pagan Ur; so He knows how to judge the world and preserve His people. He never forgets the people of faith even in the midst of His judgment: The judge of all the world will do right, and He will not destroy the just with the unjust. The sheep will be separated from the goats.

B. The glorious kingdom of Christ is set before the minds of the people:

1. In Christ the blind see and the deaf hear the words of the book; the meek inherit the earth, and joy in the Lord. The poor in spirit rejoice.

2. Christ overthrows Satan and his evil people. God makes a difference between the just and the unjust.

a) Satan rules by terror and scorn. He uses guilt and fear to control his people. The hole you dig for yourself is one of fear and guilt. Satan is the accuser of the brethren and holds men in bondage until they are set free by the blood of Christ. The cross removes fear because it removes my guilt, and Satan has no hold on me, I am set

free to serve the living and true God.

b) The elect of Israel did not see yet the fruits of Christ's kingdom, but they could see it by faith, and trust in God. They could see that their inheritance was not yet, but in the eternal glory of God. In that, we are like them; although we have a much fuller revelation of the glories of Christ's kingdom, yet we do not yet see all things put under Him. We also walk by faith, but with better promises.

3. God will fulfill the covenant that He made with Abraham in pouring out His spirit upon His people and renewing their hearts and minds until the end of the world.

4. Their faith comes: vs. 22: "They shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale." He that believeth shall not be ashamed. Perfect love casts out fear.

5. A generation shall be born that fears and sanctifies the Lord God, and learn doctrine.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.