

JAMES: FAITH WORKS / RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OVERALLS #4

“Persevering with God’s Wisdom” (James 1:5-8)

Mission Bible Fellowship (April 28, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

Introduction:

1. Please open your Bibles this morning to James Chapter 1.
2. In my previous 3 sermons I have sought to deliberately and meticulously lay out several foundation stones which are not only central to understanding the Book of James but they are vital to the entirety of our Christian lives:
 - a. First we studied:
 - I. **The Lordship of Christ** in verse 1— where James presents the Master/slave relationship which every obedient Christian must understand and submit to.
 - A. In point of fact even young children can understand what this means.
 - B. **ILL> Meeeee!** ☺☺☺☺☺
 - ☺
 1. There are some preaching experiences that this pastor will never forget something like a car accident where everything goes into slow motion.
 2. 35 years ago I was finishing my sermon with a final emphasis on the Lordship of Christ in our lives.
 3. I closed that message with: *“Dear ones Jesus told us that we cannot serve two masters so I want to ask you this simple question: Who is going to be the Master of your life Jesus or you?”*
 4. And from somewhere in the congregation I heard a commotion where a child was obviously being muzzled *“Mumumumuym!”*
 5. Trying to ignore the distraction I asked the question again: *“Who is going to be the Master of your life Jesus or you?”*
 6. As my eyes zeroed in on the source of the disturbance I saw a four-year-old girl doing battle with her mother *“Mumumuym!”*.
 7. As this child wrestled her mom’s hand off her mouth she raised a clinched fist and shouted **“Meeeee!”**
 8. Although this response is not surprising to hear from an unsaved *wise in her own eyes* child there are many adults who profess to know Christ and yet their lives betray their lips.
 9. ☺☺☺☺☺ I knew this child well and at least she was telling the truth without hypocrisy!

TRANS> Continuing in the Book of James my next sermon focused on:

- II. **The Reality and Purpose of Suffering** in verses 1b-4 Where we learned that we can have joy even in the midst of trials and deep sorrow which God will use to grow and mature our Christian faith.

- III. And then last time we were together I presented what I call “***The Problems Chart***” which provides us all with **Practical Help for the Hurting** where we saw how the problems of life will make us either bitter or better and we choose which one it will be.
- d. If you were not here for any of those messages I will soon have them posted online so in addition to signing up for Kathleen’s missionary newsletter you are welcome to just check the box and I will send you the website link where you can access the audio and written transcripts of these sermons.

TRANS> So as I continue this series in the Book of James Please follow along as I read the first 8 verses of Chapter 1. *James 1:1-8*

- 1 *James, a (slave) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.*
- 2 *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,*
- 3 *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*
- 4 *And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
- 5 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*
- 6 *But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*
- 7 *For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,*
- 8 *being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

TRANS> I have entitled this morning’s message: “***Persevering with God’s Wisdom***” and I want to begin by focusing on the first point in your Sermon Outlines which is:

I. The Source of Wisdom (1:5)

James 1:5 “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

A. First of all let’s define “*wisdom*” as it is used here in our text.

1. Although there have always been many intelligent people in the world we must never confuse **intelligence** with **wisdom**.
2. Sometimes very smart people can believe some very foolish things which lead them to make very foolish decisions.
3. While intelligence may enable someone to make a good **living** only heavenly wisdom will enable us to know how to **live** for the **glory** of God **and** the **good** of others.
4. God’s *wisdom* enables us to **see** and **understand** life from His point of view.

Proverbs 3:5-7

- 5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.*
- 6 *In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.*
- 7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*

5. Those who study the Book of Proverbs quickly observe that King Solomon is constantly contrasting the wise man and the fool the wise man and the fool.

- a. And just about the time we think that there is no one who is worse than a fool we come to *Proverbs 26:12* which says:

Proverbs 26:12 “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

- b. Proverbs teaches that even a fool can repent and become wise but the man who is “wise in his own eyes” is pretty much doomed to a life of making one foolish decision after another because he won’t listen to anyone except his own prideful self.
- c. Unfortunately all of us are born “wise in our own eyes” where our sinful flesh craves to have our own way but godly parents will patiently and persistently point their children to God’s wisdom and away from their foolish thinking and behaviors ☺☺☺ even as Mom and Dad lovingly apply the “board of education” to the “seat of knowledge.” ☺☺☺
- B. As we go through the trials and testings of life especially when we are suffering the slaves of Christ must look to our Heavenly Master with a submissive and prayerful heart that really wants to know what God is trying to accomplish in our lives as He seeks to make us more like Jesus Christ through these difficulties.
- C. As we studied “The Problems Chart” last time you will remember that I spent a good deal of time unpacking: *Romans 8:28-29*.

Romans 8:28-29

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

1. I trust that you will never no way ever again quote verse 28 apart from 29 because the “good” of verse 28 is defined in 29.
 2. Simply put God brings the “all things” trials of life to make us more-and-more like our Master and less-and-less like our old sinful selves.
- D. ☺☺☺ So please allow me a moment to go from preaching-to-meddling as I seek to counsel all of you. ☺☺☺☺☺
1. Have you ever had someone ask “*How are you doing?*”
 2. Where you answered “*I am having a really bad day!*” ?
 3. Now if *Romans 8:28-29* is true and it is then the Christians the slaves of Christ never have a bad day!!! <REPEAT>
 4. Like the suffering Jewish Christians that James was writing to it is perfectly OK to say “*I am having a really hard day!*”
 5. But we don’t ever have “bad days!” because our sovereign Master is working every event in our lives for good to make us more like Christ.
 6. Please understand that I am not just playing with words here.

7. Theologically the difference between having a "hard day" and having a "bad day" are as far apart as the east is from the west!!
8. So here is your *Nelsonism* for the day:
"Faith declares that God is up to something and it is good!"
9. So *James 1:5* is for all of us who are having "hard days" or weeks or even years!!
10. For some Christians the hardships and difficulties of life will never end until they are in Heaven.
11. But whether they are just for a day or for a lifetime as slaves of Christ we are commanded to glorify God through them all.
12. And so James strongly exhorts those who are suffering in:

James 1:5 "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

E. "Let him ask" is not a suggestion it is a command in the Greek.

Proverbs 2:2-5

- 2 *Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding;*
- 3 *For **if** you cry for **discernment**, Lift your voice for **understanding**;*
- 4 ***If** you seek her as silver And **search** for her as for hidden treasures;*
- 5 ***Then** you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.*

1. But sadly so many Christians don't receive God's wisdom simply because they don't ask Him for it.
 - a. Or instead of looking to God His Word and wise biblical counselors to find a Christ-honoring path they talk to their friends who may not know an epistle from an apostle.
 - b. Or they turn to what I call the "*Flip and Point Method*."
 - (1) "Oh Lord show me your will:" "And Judas went out and hanged himself!"
 - (2) "Lord show me another one:" "Go thou and do likewise."
 - (3) "Lord just one more time:" "Doest thou quickly!"
2. It was almost 40 years ago when a desperate father asked me to counsel his daughter because she was planning to marry a man in prison who had murdered his parents and siblings.
 - a. This father had foolishly taken her to do ministry in a men's prison which in my *personal humble and unbiased* opinion should never no way never don't even think about it ever be done ever!
 - (1) Taking women into a men's prison or jail is like dangling a steak in front of a hungry dog!

- (2) So when it comes to evangelism and counseling please allow me to give you some **wisdom**: men should minister to men and women to women.
- (3) ☺☺☺☺☺ One of the *laws of the Medes Persians **and** the Nelsons which shall **not** be changed* is that I never counsel or allow myself to be alone with an under-aged child or a woman without either a parent or my wife being present **PERIOD!**
- (4) As a pastor I don't have to be guilty I only have to be undefendable my word against her's and I am out of the ministry for the rest of my life.
- (5) And if a child were to accuse me I could end up in prison!

1 Thessalonians 5:22 “abstain from every form of evil.”

- (6) This word “form” <ἴ-δος> in the Greek can also be translated “appearance”
 - (7) Please remember that: It doesn't have to **be** bad it just has to **look** bad!
<REPEAT>
 - (8) So as slaves of Jesus Christ God's wisdom commands us to avoid even the **appearance** of evil.
- b. So Marian and I tried to speak wisdom into this girls heart but her father had raised her with the “*Flip and Point*” method of determining God's will so she had it all worked out.
- (1) But even though this guy was never going to be released from prison she maintained that God had shown her that he would actually be getting out very soon.
 - (2) So when I asked her to show me the biblical basis for her beliefs she pointed me to the life of Joseph in Egypt who was eventually released from Pharaoh's prison.
 - (3) This was **not** God's **wisdom!** it was “*wise in her own eyes*” stubborn foolish twisting of Scripture. And sadly she refused to accept any correction.
 - (4) Her wedding dress was all made and she was going to go through with it because she was sure God told her to.
 - (5) And as she did you can only imagine the life-long consequences of her “*wise in her own eyes*” foolishness.
 - (6) Even though this self-deceived woman believed that she was asking God for wisdom this is never no way **never** don't even think about it **ever** the way to go about it.
 - (7) And when people make such foolish decisions God often gets blamed for the consequences because after all they **prayed** about it.
3. Our text commands us to ask God for wisdom but in the asking we must constantly remember that **He** is the **Master** and we are **His** slaves and as our Master He is not here to “**rubber stamp**” our unbiblical foolish plans and desires.

- F. So if you want God's wisdom then I urge you to seek wise Bible-centered counsel from mature Christians who know God's Word better than you do and who will love you enough to speak truth into your life.

James 1:5 "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

1. According to this text God gives His wisdom "... generously and without reproach ..."

 - a. Please be assured that God wants us to know His will for our lives far more than we want to know it!
 - b. He is generous with His wisdom and He never reproaches us which means that He will not scold or insult us for asking.
 - c. He never says, "I can't believe this. You again!!"

2. And please remember that God will never lead anyone contrary to what He has already revealed in Scripture. For example it says in:

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

KJV "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ..."

 - a. The "yoke" was a carved wooden beam that connected two work animals to a plow or a cart and so the Apostle Paul explains his instruction by applying the O.T. Law which forbade the binding of an ox and donkey in the same yoke.
 - b. For example an ox and a mule are different sizes and strengths and God knew that they would hurt each other if they were yoked together because they pull differently.
 - c. Furthermore they would not be able to plow a straight line.
 - d. So Paul uses this O.T. law to illustrate the importance of a Christian not being bound together with unbelievers in close relationships which would include friendships business and especially marriage.
 - (1) For example in an "unequally yoked" marriage:
 - (2) He wants to take the kids fishing but she wants to take them to church.
 - (3) She wants to support her church but He wants to buy a boat.
 - (4) He wants no religion in the home but she wants to raise the children to love and serve God.
 - (5) Not only does this unequal yoke hurt the husband and wife they will hurt and confuse the children who will feel pressured to choose loyalty to one parent over the other: something that no child should ever be required to do.
 - e. And yet in spite of Paul's wise instruction Christians often date court and marry unbelievers all in the name of:

(1) "But I prayed about it" or

(2) "God gave me peace that this was the way to go!" or

(3) "I put out a fleece and God answered my prayer" or

(4) "Well he said that he would go to church with me" or

(5) Worst of all! "God gave me an open door."

(6) ☺☺☺☺ When I hear this one I like to quote Jay Adams who says "Some open doors lead to elevator shafts!"

- f. So when it comes to being "*unequally yoked together with unbelievers*" in close friendships or business or marriage God's wisdom has **already** been given through His written Word where "**NO**" means "**NO!**"
- g. And God will never change His mind to accommodate the foolish whims of His ignorant or stubborn children!
- h. The simple truth is that God's wisdom and instruction will **never** lead you contrary to what He has already revealed in Scripture.

G. It does not matter whether you are young or old we all need God's wisdom which comes through careful Bible study and the admonishment of other mature Christians who will love you enough to speak truth into your life.

- 1. Over these many years of ministry it has been my privilege to know some godly young people who were very wise way beyond their years.
- 2. But I have also had the sorrow of dealing with many grey-haired "*wise-in-their-own-eyes*" adults some of whom were church leaders who were **prideful** and **foolish** beyond measure.
- 3. So whether we are young or old grey hair or no hair Scripture commands us all to respond humbly joyfully submissively and obediently to Biblical instruction and admonishment.
- 4. Here is what I say to all my counselees "*I will never ask you to walk across the street to hear my opinion because my opinion has no more authority than anyone else's. However I am going to ask you to make great efforts to hear and to obey what God's Word has to say about your problems.*"

Hebrews 3:13 "… encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

- 5. And for those of us who lead Christ's church and give counsel to others we must constantly be on guard against pride and arrogance even as we remember how foolish we ourselves once were.
 - a. *Ephesians 4:15* commands all of us to speak "*the **truth** in **love**.*"

- b. The Apostle Peter exhorted his fellow-elders the under-shepherds of Christ's church saying in: *1 Peter 5:2-3*

1 Peter 5:2-3

- 2 *shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;*
 3 *nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

- c. If you want to move a herd of cattle then you drive them from behind with shouting and bullwhips but sheep must be led.
- d. As Peter admonished here God's under-shepherds must lead by their humble example **not** arrogantly lording it over others with sharp and unloving words.
- e. Years ago I was pastoring at a church where the elders had tasked me with the privilege of developing the biblical counseling ministry.
- (1) My office was down the hall from the other pastor and with both of our doors closed I would often hear him yelling at those who had come to him for counselling.
- (2) But sadly no amount of careful admonishment would turn him away from his arrogance and finally after half of the church left Marian and I did the same.
- (3) So as we continue to think about God's wisdom let's turn ahead to a pertinent passage from: *James 3:13-18*

James 3:13-18

- 13 *Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the **gentleness of wisdom**.*
 14 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*
 15 *This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.*
 16 *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*
 17 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*
 18 *And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

- (4) As I quoted earlier from *Ephesians 4:15* it is not enough to just speak the **truth**. We must speak the truth in love.
- (5) So here is another *Nelsonism* for today: "*The Word of God is hard enough for all of us to hear as it cuts against the grain of our sinful flesh. Therefore we must **never** deliver God's truth in an arrogant package which is wrapped in barbed-wire.*"
- (6) Whether in public or private God-honoring pastors must endeavor to shepherd graciously with the wisdom of God's Word which must always be delivered with love patience and kindness.

TRANS> So far this morning we have studied **The Source of God Wisdom**. Now let's move on to Point #2 in my Sermon Outline where God gives another command for all who would receive His wisdom in *James 1:6-8* which I call:

II. The Prayer of Faith (1:6-8) Let's pick up the context at verse 5.

James 1:5-8

- 5 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*
- 6 *But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*
- 7 *For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,*
- 8 *being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

A. As a framework for this text I want to read:

Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

B. Please remember that God wants to give His children wisdom far more than we want to receive it.

1. However as our Lord and Master He has the right to demand that we "... *ask in faith without any doubting ...*"

a. First of all we must never doubt either His sovereignty or His love.

(1) Remember "*God is up to something— and it is good!*"

(2) And the purpose of all our trials is to make us more like our Master.

Philippians 4:19 *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

(3) So according to our James text one of those needs is for us to receive God's wisdom for the trials of life today.

(4) Now we either believe *James 1:5* and *Philippians 4:19* or we don't.

(5) And our loving Master understands that sometimes all of us are like the man in *Mark 9:24* who cried out to Jesus saying, "***I do believe; help my unbelief!***"

(6) Although this desperate father only had a "*mustard seed*" amount of faith it was still a genuine faith and so Jesus blessed it!

2. But there are those who say that they want God's wisdom who in fact have no intention of honoring our Lord with humble and thankful obedience even if they were to receive it.

a. *James 1:6* compares such doubters to "... *the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*"

b. In *Ephesians 4:14* Paul warns that:

Ephesians 4:14 "... we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;"

- c. Protection from such predators only comes when God's wisdom is gratefully and humbly received and obeyed.

3. But in contrast *James 1:7* gives this serious warning:

James 1:7 "For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,"

- a. Not only will he not receive the wisdom that he claims to be seeking James says that he is not likely to receive anything from God at all!
- b. And the reason for this is given in the next verse:

James 1:8 "being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

- c. "Double-minded" is <dip-su-chos> in the Greek which literally means "two-souled."
- d. Although he declares his desire to learn and follow God's ways in fact he really only wants his own way which should remind us all of: *1 Kings 18:21*.

1 Kings 18:21 *Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."*

- e. Just like Israel of old who could not serve God and worship Baal so to Christians must not be "double-minded" saying that they want to learn and obey God's wisdom while wanting to have their own way at the same time.
- f. Since James observes a "two-souled" person to be: "unstable in all his ways" it is doubtful that such a man is a true Christian at all.

(1) I refer to such people as "Practical Atheists!" because although they declare faith in God they actually live their daily lives as though He does not exist.

(2) Instead of trusting God for wisdom they turn to the world for their answers.

(3) James is simply exhorting God's true children to grow up and not to behave like unbelievers.

Conclusion:

1. So as I close this morning in all the vicissitudes of life please remember that our loving Master wants to give you His wisdom far more than you want to receive it.
2. And as a genuine Christian seeks to know and obey God's will our Lord promises to reveal it through His Word and wise by wise biblical counsel.
3. To that end I would like to recommend two fine books to that will help you to understand the wisdom and will of God for every Christian:

4. Decision Making and the Will of God by Garry Friesen AND
5. Just do Something by Kevin DeYoung “*How to make a Decision without Dreams, Fleecees, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky Etc.*”
6. Let's pray together: