

James 25-05-18a

Greetings, welcome to Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 18th of May, 2025. We're in the Epistle of Jacob or James.

I really prefer the former, but it's traditionally known as the latter. We are in this introductory section. So important to maintain the context.

The context is testing. All of us are tested. All of us are currently being tested in various ways, shapes and forms.

This is such a practical section. People tend to think that that theme diminishes and other things come to the fore or come to be the topic. But all of this, everything in this chapter, as far as you can see, is on testing.

We're always being tested, sometimes more visibly, sometimes less so, sometimes more energetically or severely, sometimes less so. Every day, every hour, we are put to the test because we are people of faith and we are here to lay hold of righteousness by faith. So this section is incredibly significant, incredibly important for us to understand.

We're going to pick up this morning. We saw verse five last time. We're going to pick up at verse five and move through six through eight this morning.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and studying. Father, how grateful we are for this time of interaction where the spiritual gifts that you've distributed in our midst, knowing the kind of group that you composed us to be, knowing that we would be scattered. You have correspondingly granted special spiritual ministries to each one of us.

And even at a distance, we are blessed by them. We thank you for them. We thank you for each one who is faithful to fellowship with us and to share the blessings that you have placed at their disposal.

And through our contact, we exchange a wonderful sense of unity in the Holy Spirit as followers of the Lord Jesus, endeavoring to represent Him in this life. We pray this morning as we look at this portion of your word that the Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart, transcend the limitations of the presenter and the presentation so that the power of your word will infuse each heart and each soul in a way that is meaningful, helpful, that shines a light on our path in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Reading our passage, we have my brothers count it all joy, account it, look at it as an occasion for celebration when you fall into whatever kind of trial the day brings. Knowing this, what separates us from the world, what separates us from believers who have not pursued an understanding of God's word is what we know.

You are different. I am different because of what we know. If we fail to think about what we

know, if we fail to bring it to bear, we shoot ourselves in the foot.

I think of this often as my memory gets less reliable and as my troubleshooting instincts dull a bit. I will be working on a piano, I come across an issue, something's not working right. I spend five, ten, twelve minutes trying to understand why this note is not playing, why this key is sticking.

Eventually, I find the problem and I think, I saw this previously. There was another piano that had this problem. Why didn't I check this first? I know that there is a cause and effect, but if I don't have that knowledge fresh in my mind, if it's been a long time since I found that this is an old grand that's got a screw in the action and it does the soft pedal a different way, if it's not fresh in my mind, then even though I know a thing, it doesn't come to bear.

Have you ever worked to solve a problem and when you find the solution, you say, oh, of course, I faced this before. We don't want this to happen to us in our spiritual life. When we know truths, when we have spiritual knowledge, we want it to be fresh.

This is why daily exposure to the Word of God is so helpful. This is why cultivating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in an active, leading, and guiding way is so important because God's knowledge doesn't fail. It doesn't fade.

It doesn't become irrelevant. It doesn't get dated or pass its sell by date or best by date. It's always useful knowing if I've said this almost every week, that word needs to be circled with asterisks in your Bible and certainly in our hearts, in our souls.

We can see life from a divine perspective based on what we know, but we have to remember what we know. We have to think about what we know, knowing that we are here to be tested and the test is, do you believe God? Do you believe His promises? Do you believe in His love? Do you believe in His plan and purpose? That it makes sense that as the old song says, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Our trials will seem so small when we see Christ.

One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase. When we have run the race, when we see Christ, it will be worth it. That's our faith.

That is fueled by our hope, our motivation to persevere, to endure, to push through, to look to the author and finisher of our faith, who did the same thing Himself for the joy that was set before Him. And He accounted His earthly ministry and His work on the cross, death, burial, and resurrection worth it for the joy that was set before Him. The Lord Jesus did what James is talking about here.

He accounted it joy, whatever temptations He faced, whether they were directly from Satan, from the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the chief priests, the elders. Oddly enough, Jesus really wasn't tested by the Romans. It was His own people.

Oftentimes, a man's enemies are in his own household and of his own kith and kin. And we're

not as often attacked by the world as we are from in-house misunderstandings, those who are immature. And we are enjoined to bear with those who are weak, bear with the weaker brother.

If we're the adult in the room, we should act like it. We should be sober. We should be vigilant.

We watch for our adversary, the devil who roams about, seeking whom he may devour. But if you've ever watched Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom or whatever animal planet shows they have now, and they get out in the African veldt and they film lions, who is it the lions get when they herd of gazelles or antelope or whatever lives? It's the weak. It's the unalert.

It's the slow. It's the immature. That's what they get.

Rarely do they get the strong members of the herd. Seeking whom he may devour. So knowing this knowledge every day, whatever the circumstance, we're at work.

We're at home. We're ticking off the elements that we have to get done in that day. We have a schedule.

We have appointments. We have things that must be done. It's trash day.

It's laundry day. The dishes are in the sink. The dogs have been in after a rain and we've got to clean up.

By the way, these dog mats that have thick little finger-like nap protrusions seem to work. We provision. We plan ahead.

You got water coming under a door when it rains, you wait for good weather and take steps to alleviate that problem in the future. We all have responsibilities, opportunities, priorities that we have to sort and shuffle to get things done. All of it should be informed.

We're going to see this this morning as we move forward. Knowing that the putting to the test of your faith, are you going to believe God or are you going to believe some other narrative, some other view, some other perspective? Which is it? What James is going to tell us this morning is there is only one perspective, not two, only one. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

We've covered that in great detail. Verse five, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. If you have trouble knowing, believing that the testing of your faith produces patience, ask God for reinforcement, for more information, for perspective from the Holy Spirit.

Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be open.

We all struggle with maintaining a divine viewpoint, a divine perspective when we're human and we're surrounded by humans and the bulk of the human race lives in accordance with the rules of the world, the ideas of the world, the priorities and the values and the goals that characterize fallen humanity. We are pulled in that direction by instinct, by fraternity, by

exposure. The media that comes to us from every direction, mostly little square devices, sometimes bigger rectangular devices, is worldly.

Unless we consciously take steps to go to God and ask Him for wisdom and then go to the well where the water of the word is found. This is why we're a Bible church. This is why we're together today.

This is why we go to the archives or find other faithful teaching of the word of God and glean it, harvest it, bring it in, process it, think about it, keep our mind on the Lord and in His word, soaking up His promises, the principles, the doctrines that ought to structure and characterize our thinking. If we catch ourselves looking at it from a human perspective, James has got something to say about that this morning. If you lack wisdom, ask of God, any of you.

If he lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. Notice he says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask. This is wonderfully tactful because our initial response is, well, I don't lack wisdom.

You know how long I've been studying the word of God. You know how many notebooks I've filled. You know how many notes I've got in the margin of my Bible.

I don't lack wisdom. James slips this under our guard. This is kind of an uppercut.

You might be working your opponent with jabs and instead of trying to hit you with a cross that can be fended away, he slips under your guard. And James slips this under. If any of you lacks wisdom, oh, that's the other guy.

Let him ask. But if we're smart, we say him is us. Him is me.

I am sure that there is wisdom I lack that God is going to teach me and bring to fruition in terms of what we used to say, turning gnosis to epinosis, turning head knowledge to heart knowledge, turning what I know into experiential practical wisdom. Notice how he has effortlessly transitioned from what you know to wisdom. Knowledge is one thing.

Wisdom is another. Knowledge is in my head. Wisdom is what I practice.

So I may know some things, but I'm not getting it done. It doesn't seem to push its way through into application. I've done observation.

I've heard interpretation. And I agree with it. And I assent to it.

And I'm for it. But when it comes to application, the third corner of that wonderful triangle, I'm not getting it done. I'm not getting the wisdom done.

He doesn't say if any of you lacks knowledge, does he? If any of you lacks wisdom, I'm having trouble applying. When you take piano lessons, you got a teacher. Now you can get it via an app, like Simply Piano.

Do it on your own schedule, on your own time, at your own level. Pay a few bucks a month and you can learn piano. Get a iPad or a Surface or something and use it instead of sheet music.

Set it right there on the music rack. You can learn piano at home anytime you want. It monitors you.

It listens to you and offers correction. Whether it's a standard traditional music teacher like I had, whether it is an online lesson like is available now, you can know what a song is supposed to sound like. You can know the fingering that can bring that tune out of a piano.

I know exactly. This is my problem with reading sheet music. I read sheet music beautifully.

I can tell you every note. I can tell you what chord that is. Is it augmented, diminished? Is it a seventh? Is it a seven over nine? I know all of that.

But when I sit down to play the piano and I look at the sheet music, I can't make it happen in real time. I can laboriously get my fingers on the notes and play that chord. Then I have to look at the next one and I've got to manually move each finger and remember my sharps or flats and naturals and how long should that note last.

But I am clumsy and awkward and it is impossible for me to read the way I type. I can look away and read a book and if I need to copy that text into something on the computer, my fingers will reproduce that text exactly. I'm a good typist with a lot of experience.

So I don't have to look at my hands. So I have to look at the keyboard. What I see with my eyes comes out my fingers and turns into text on the computer.

I wish I could play the piano that way. Some of you all can. Many people can.

Think about this in spiritual terms. It isn't what you know ought to be happening. It's what you can make happen.

That's the difference between knowledge and wisdom. If you lack wisdom, James says, I don't need more Bible class. I need help in making what I learned in Bible class happen in my mind, in my speech, my conversations, in my attitudes.

I know I shouldn't worry, but I worry. I know I shouldn't fret, but I fret. I know I shouldn't be impatient and exasperated with other people, but I am impatient and exasperated.

I know better, but I don't have the wisdom to keep from chain sinning, cluster sinning, cluster bombing those around me with ungodly behavior. I know better. It's a wisdom issue.

So do you see James introducing the problem of a test? Everybody does great when it's you're wafted on flowery beds of ease and everything is good. Everything is just what you want. It's great.

You just lean back and smile, cross your ankles, put your fingers behind your head interlaced and say, that's great. It's not a test unless you're supposed to be working and you're doing that instead. Wisdom is what we need.

If any of you lacks wisdom, don't start thinking, well, there's something wrong with my knowledge. I've seen this happen in church groups where application failed in a group setting. Pastors left, churches split, groups got mad at each other.

And instead of cultivating wisdom, asking God for wisdom, they decided the knowledge was wrong. The doctrine is bad. The teaching was faulty.

So we're going to go get other teaching. If you've been on solid ground and the Holy Spirit has blessed the word of God to your heart, it's not the teaching. It's not the content of the word of God.

It's our ability to put it into use. Wisdom. Ask God for wisdom.

If we're struggling to make good application, I've said before, some things are not a matter of prayer. You can't pray to know God's truth. You've got to go to find good teaching somewhere so that you can know.

That's not a prayer issue. Wisdom, however, is a prayer issue. And all of us struggle in one area or more with application.

Why struggle? Go to God. Ask Him. He gives to all liberally and without reproach.

There's a famous naval saying, it is not enough that an officer in the Navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of refined manners, punctilious, courteous, etc., etc.

I could rattle off the whole thing. But it gets to the point where it says, if someone is trying to do a job and they have a well-meant shortcoming, they meant well, they were putting in an effort, but they goofed a little bit. Don't throw the guy overboard.

Don't keelhaul him or have him walk the plank because he was making an effort and messed up. That is different than heedless or stupid blunder. Well-meant shortcoming in this famous naval saying, I think it's from John Paul Jones, is distinguished from heedless or stupid blunder.

You weren't paying attention or you were stupid, meaning in those days, you didn't know what you were supposed to know and you didn't apply what you did know. There's a difference. God recognizes that we're endeavoring to live a life that pleases Him.

And so when we go to Him and say, Lord, I'm in the application phase, I am stumbling and falling time after time after time. I want to implement what I know. I know I should have peace.

I know I should have the fruit of the spirit. I know I should have love in the four spheres of love,

one another love, neighbor love, outsider love, enemy love. I want to do those right, but I keep messing it up.

I've got patterns of failure here. Give me wisdom. God will give liberally, generously.

You will find suddenly that you've got the means. It's like your piano teacher, again, leaning over your shoulder and saying, you know, if you'll just cross your thumb under that third finger, you can hit all the rest of those notes. And it's graceful.

It's effortless. You know, if you just change the way you're doing this a little bit, it becomes so much easier. Your timing will be better.

Your notes will be clearer and more even. You know, if you'd get your piano tuned, this would sound a lot better and you'd practice more. You wouldn't torture yourself with cacophony coming out of the instrument.

Ask of God. He gives to all anyone who asks him. God is searching the earth for someone who is interested enough in living a life that pleases him to ask him for help, to ask him for wisdom, liberally without reproach.

Wouldn't it be awful if you ask for help and all somebody did was criticize? In fact, you don't have to hypothesize that happens. Sometimes we go for help and someone is ungracious, unkind, is sinful in their response. I know this as someone who has to work on that problem.

It's not God. It's not God's way. He is generous.

He will give wisdom and he doesn't rebuke. He doesn't reproach. He doesn't say, what the heck is the matter with you? That we come to him at all so thrills his divine heart that he is liberal in dispensing wisdom, bringing it by whatever means it can come to us through the Holy Spirit, activating parts of the word of God that we've forgotten about.

It can come through fellow believers with the exercise of their fellowship, their spiritual gift, their prayers, their comfort, their encouragement. It can come by example. We can suddenly see something that strikes a chord and reminds us or suggests to us, this is the way, walk ye in it.

It will be given to him. It is a promise. Bank it, exploit it, withdraw it, spend it.

It's a promise of God. Why fail? Why be frustrated? Why worry? Why fret? Why suffer when God is leaning forward generously and without reproach to give us the means of applying. He's our father.

We are his children. The Lord Jesus purchased us with an inestimable price, his own blood. God is not in the business of sharpshooting us and causing us to suffer.

However, there is a condition for this prayer, this request. It's a very powerful and very deal-

breaking condition. Many people go to God and ask for things, and their prayers go unanswered, or the answer is negative.

What is the condition under which we can go to God and ask for wisdom, and he will give it liberally and without reproach? That is verse six. Ask in faith. Don't present it as, Lord, I wonder if you would consider granting me wisdom.

I've prayed. I know a lot of people pray, and they say their prayers are not answered. I really am pulled in the direction of solving this problem another way, but I thought I'd give prayer a try.

I've got several options here. I thought I'd pray. If that doesn't work, I'm going to try this other thing.

Let me tell you something about this next word with no doubting. This is a fascinating word. This word is diakrino.

Diakrino means to judge. Dia emphasizes it or strengthens it. Dia means through.

Diameter, draw a line, through you've got a circumference, you've got a radius, you've got a diameter. It's the line that goes through the circle from one side to the other, from nine to three on a clock. Through, to judge through.

Krino actually in its original meaning, and it translates Hebrew words that have this same idea, means to see the difference, to see the difference. And it is used, for example, in Mark 11.23, Jesus is speaking. And in the Greek translation of what I am sure was originally Aramaic, it says this, assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be removed and cast into the sea.

Remember, this is one of those little faith moments. And the disciples are amazed that Jesus can speak and amazing things happen. Jesus says, truly, assuredly, take this to the bank.

I am telling you, that's how emphatic it is. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever, remember here in James, it says, he gives to anyone, he gives to everyone, anyone who will ask, God will grant. Whoever says to this mountain, and Jesus turned and gestured to the mountain on which he was seated, be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart.

Diakrino, does not doubt, but believes that those things, he says, will be done. Now, what about this? If I believe in my heart that if I just pray, God will give me an incredible amount of money raining down into my savings account. What do you think the conditions are for this kind of imperative? I'm going to say to a mountain, and of course, we're looking metaphorically here.

We don't typically have to move a mountain physically, but there is a mountain facing us. It is an impediment to our progress. We're going along on the path that God has assigned us.

Suddenly, there is a very steep climb. I can't climb at this time. I don't want to climb at this time.

It is too steep. It is too hard. It's too big to go around.

It's something that is impeding my progress, and it's big, and it is seemingly insurmountable. I've got a problem. I don't see the solution.

They didn't have bulldozers and crews of workmen and say, just give us a few months, and we'll slice a great piece out of this mountain so that you can build a road. Those of us that live in this area saw this over on Keatonville Hill. They used to have a winding Highway 20, had to climb and circle, and there was a narrow little ledge they had cut into the side of Keatonville Hill so that you could get up it and over it and go over to Owosso or to Collinsville.

They spent months, and they got earth-moving equipment, and they moved I don't know how many thousands of tons of rock and dirt and made a wonderful, smooth, gradual ascent that goes and gets you past Keatonville Hill and on to your westward destination. We don't have that in the spiritual realm. We don't have spiritual bulldozers.

What do we have? We have prayer. Now, what is the condition for this prayer to be answered in the affirmative? If he says to this mountain, notice he's not talking to God. He is saying to the mountain, be removed and dump yourself in the sea.

You be cast into the sea. I don't just want it to disappear. I want this mountain to physically relocate underwater.

What is the sea? What is the regular figurative usage of the sea? In fact, we're going to see it in our passage this morning. Remember Isaiah, is it 57, the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters, it's 57:20 of Isaiah, the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.

20 and 21, Isaiah 57. Routinely, the turbulent waters speak of chaotic, dark forces that are uncontrollable by human beings. It's too big.

It's too violent. It overwhelms even professional fishermen were fearing for their lives with the storm on the Sea of Galilee. So in this context, when the Lord Jesus says, mountain, root yourself up and go dump yourself in the sea and does not doubt, does not diacrine in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

Let me ask you now, what is the nature of this condition? If I say mountain of debt up in the tens of thousands of dollars, let's say, let's say I've got a \$85,000 debt. I don't, but let's say I did. It's a mountain of debt, mountain of debt, be uprooted and cast into the sea.

Let the godless pagan unbelievers handle it and deal with it. I want it gone. I want it out of my way.

It's impeding my progress. Can I have no doubt in my heart and believe that that is now going to take place by divine power and divine prerogative? My speaking doesn't have power to make it happen, does it? Why would that happen? If I speak to a mountain and say, be removed and cast into the sea, what power would accomplish that? It's God's power, right? So how could I

believe in my heart that it would happen? Nothing doubting. I would have to have absolute certainty in my soul that this is the will of God.

And God doesn't have an alternative that I haven't seen. This is his plan. This is his purpose.

And God is going to make this happen. This is the faith Jesus had when he said, Lazarus come forth. This is the faith Abraham had when he tied Isaac to the altar and raised the knife.

I am absolutely certain that God has brought me to this place. And I am about to do something very counterintuitive, but it is God's will and God has a way. And Diacrino, remember I said it is to see the difference between things? James is going to use it in the next chapter.

Look at chapter two, verse four, when he says, uh, you pay attention to a rich man who comes into your assembly and you ask him to come up and sit in a good place. And you say to the poor man, you stand there or sit here at my footstool. Have you not shown partiality among yourselves? Have you not Diacrino'd? You see a difference.

There shouldn't be a difference. Every person ought to look exactly the same in the fellowship, regardless of their monetary status or how they dress. There should be no difference at all.

There is one and only one alternative on treating people in the congregation. And that is with one another love. No other policy.

There's not two policies for due to two different kinds of people. You see no difference. When Paul says there is neither Jew nor Greek, there's either slave or free, there's either male or female.

What is he talking about? Obviously there are all of those things, but policy in the church is it makes no difference at all. Your color, your creed, well, your creed, but not your color or your economic status or your gender or any other thing. Not your background, not your, your cultural roots.

You are here. We are one. And there is no difference.

Diacrino means to see a difference. So if it means don't show partiality, don't differentiate people. What does it mean in the context of Mark when Jesus says in 1123, do not doubt in your heart.

No Diacrino. There is no alternative. There's no other way.

I am absolutely convinced. This is how Abraham got through the Mount Moriah incident. There is no alternative.

Isaac is going to live. If God commands me to kill him, then he's going to have to come back because there's only, God has promised me multiple times in Isaac my seed will be called. So in the path of obedience, there is one outcome.

And that is through me via Isaac, all nations of the earth are going to be blessed. I'm going to have descendants as numerous as the sand and the stars. And whatever happens on this mountain, Isaac is coming back down.

There is no other alternative. Do you see it? Nothing doubting. Now, if you're asking for applications so that you can represent the Lord Jesus, understand his word and his will reflect the glory of the Lord so that others are drawn to God through Christ.

And you feel like your lack of ability to apply and to avoid sin and to be a person of faith. Can you go to God and pray for wisdom? Nothing doubting. I absolutely need this.

And there's no other alternative. I see no different path. I can't solve this with human tools.

This is a God thing. I need wisdom. Only God has it.

He's promised if I ask him, he'll give it. That's it. I know he's going to give it.

And there's no other solution on the horizon. It's God or I'm going home to glory. There's just nothing else.

Nothing doubting. That's the idea. Can we pray that way? Absolutely.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up and see the rest of what James has to say about asking God for wisdom in times of struggle.