

James 25-05-18b

We're ready to resume our study here in James chapter 1. We're looking at the request for wisdom. Very seldom would it be the case that we have all the wisdom that we need all the time, and this drives us to our knees. We pray without ceasing, which in the vernacular, a colloquial translation of that is pray with the frequency of a hacking cough.

I was taught that when I was a kid. It works for me. The regular times of prayer throughout the day keeps us aware of who we are and why we're here.

When you see this asking for wisdom and asking in faith, nothing doubting. As we saw in the first session, the way to have no doubt is to be aware of God's priorities, God's plans and purposes as revealed in his word so that we can pray with absolute confidence. Does God want us to reflect the light of his glory? As Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that they see your good behavior, your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven.

They have to know that we are connected to him. They recognize that our choices, our priorities, our policies, plans are a reflection of our faith, our identity in Christ. When we go to the Lord and ask him for a piece of wisdom in a particular situation, are we doing it to please ourselves, to get ourselves out of a jam, to smooth our own path, to accomplish a personal objective that we may have? Or are we dedicated to thy will be done, not my will, but thine be done? This is what James leads up to here as we continue.

Let him ask in faith, no other alternative in view. Diacrino, I don't see a different way. There's not another possibility.

It's God's way. There's not even a highway. Sometimes people say it's my way or the highway.

It is God's way. There is no other way. I will not entertain.

I will not think about. I will not imagine. I will not explore some possible alternative that is the ways of the world that doesn't partake of God and his power and his presence, his spirit and his word as a part of my responsibility to represent the Lord Jesus.

There is no other way. One way, nothing doubting. He who doubts, and once again, it's Diacrino.

I could tell you a lot about the vocabulary here and being a part of simple and whatnot, but you get the point. You see one way and it's God's way. I live for nothing else.

I don't have a set of priorities. I don't have another objective. I'm not in it for me.

You think of those in military service who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their fellow Marines or fellow soldiers or fellow sailors. It is a selfless act to go to the battlefield and retrieve wounded, to leap on a grenade and absorb the explosion to protect others. There's no

other thought than the mission.

The mission comes first, preserving our force, accomplishing the purpose for which we were put here. That is uppermost and whatever it takes up to and including my own life. That's my purpose.

There is no Diacrino. There is no seeing another way. There's only one way.

It's God's way. I am dedicated to that no matter what. He who does entertain other alternatives, who starts giving serious consideration to other ways is like a wave of the sea, like a wave of the sea.

Instead of having the faith to cast mountains into the sea and let the mountain make its own waves when it splashes. Now I'm a wave of the sea. Notice it's one wave.

It's not the waves. It's a wave of the sea that is completely shaped by outside forces. Surfers know this about waves.

It's a combination of the shape of the land below the water, the prevailing winds, the surge, the state of the tide. Waves don't make themselves. Waves have no self-determination at all.

They are entirely a product of the environment. We are to be the exact opposite of that. The environment doesn't change me.

It doesn't alter my goals and values and priorities. It doesn't change my reliance on God's promises, His principles, His doctrines, His truth, why He had me born at this place and this time and set into these circumstances like Esther coming to the situation for such a time as this. This is my assignment.

There's not another person in this circumstance. It's me. And God expects me to step up to the plate, swing, and hit a home run because I remember how to swing.

And I have confidence that by God's grace and with His enablement, my Louisville slugger is going to contact the ball and send it over the left field fence, nothing doubting. I am here to accomplish God's purpose. And when I pray in that light and ask for wisdom to accomplish that goal, God is absolutely going to answer that prayer.

I can relax on that score. Otherwise, this man who doubts, who isn't certain that God will reveal His will, is like a wave of the sea partaking of this metaphor of the wicked who are like a troubled sea. What troubles the sea? Every wind that blows, every current that passes, heat inversions, undersea configurations trouble the sea, stir it up, froth it, knock the foam off the white caps.

A wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. If you keep your finger in James and turn back to Isaiah 57, you see the context of our memory verse. Go back to verse 15 of Isaiah 57.

Thus says the high and the lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy. Why are we worried about what the wicked do? Why are we concerned about peace or no peace? About frothing up mire and dirt or producing the fruit of the Spirit? It's a God thing. Life is about God, not about me.

The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place. It isn't subject to the vagaries of human existence.

God's heaven, God's throne room is stable, fixed and unchanging. I dwell in the high and holy with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit. The condition for praying with confidence, nothing doubting, is to have the humility to be fully yielded.

We've gotten away from that vocabulary because of its misuse, that just being a yielded person, you need context for that. But a contrite and a humble spirit is one that is fully dedicated to pleasing God, whatever that entails, whatever it takes. If it leads me through the valley of the shadow, so be it.

If I need to negotiate the hazards of prosperity, so be it. If I need to suffer, you have need of endurance so that after you have suffered for a short period, you qualify for inheriting the promises which are eternal. Momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory.

Him who has a contrite and humble spirit, God dwells. God doesn't leave his dwelling. The humble and contrite spirit enters into God's abode.

It's a thought worth dwelling on when Jesus said, the one who has my words and keeps them, he is the one who loves me. I and my father will come to him and make our home with him. And yet the one of a humble and contrite spirit is dwelling with God in the high and holy place.

God brings the high and holy place with him in our soul. And our soul becomes the temple. Was God in the tabernacle? Was God in the temple of Solomon? And yet was God also on the throne in heaven? His high and holy presence is both in heaven and with man.

That is the privilege that comes with humility, with contrition. I dwell in the high and holy place, Isaiah 57, 15, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit, to revivify, to inject and infuse life from the creator of life, from the source of life, from the one who holds eternal life in his divine hands, to revive the spirit of the humble. When our life is flagging and sagging and diminishing, and our vigor and strength are seeming to fail, God brings life as only he can to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

What is the difference in humility and contrition? Humility, I like the definition that it is strength under control. Humility is the ox that plows the field and pulls the plow through the hard soil without deviating, without stopping, without laying down on the job. Humility is strength in harness.

Contrition is recognition of need. I am obedient in humility. I am submissive in humility.

I aim whatever strength and ability I have in God's direction. That is how I employ my assets, my resources. Humility, I subject myself to the plan, the purpose, the program.

Contrition is acknowledgment of need. I am insufficient in and of myself. My plan is not a good plan.

My purpose is not a good purpose. My take, my perspective, my thought, my wishes are inadequate compared with God's. Humility and contrition.

This is why God repeats both of these in the same verse, to revive the spirit of the humble. What is the last in the list of the fruit of the spirit? Self-control, patience, endurance, long-suffering, gentleness, when you don't feel like being gentle, patience when you feel impatient, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the spirit of the contrite, those who acknowledge their need. This is what Jesus began the Beatitudes with in the Sermon on the Mount, those who are poor in spirit.

This is contrition, recognizing need. Verse 16, I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry. There is a time when God had to discipline the nation of Israel for waywardness, for failure, for looking in other directions, for being double-minded, for being unstable, for being diacrino and wanting a king, wanting to operate in the ways of their neighbors, Moab and Ammon and Philistia and Egypt, other neighbors.

We want to be like them. We want to do what they do. We want to succeed the way they succeed.

And God had to discipline. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. He scourges every son whom He receives.

We need correction so that we can be received. Do we want to be received by the Lord or do we want to be held back at the gate? Try to pass under the rod. The rod comes down.

Sorry, not you. You don't qualify. To be qualified, we need to be purified.

To be purified, we have to be tested. I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry, for the human spirit would fail before me. If all I did was rebuke and judge sin, and all of sin did come short, there would be no humans left.

They would all fail before me, of the souls that I have made, for the iniquity of covetousness. Covetousness is my desire, not God's desire. It's my will, not God's will.

This is what I would like to see happen. This is what I want for myself. Covetousness is the umbrella under which personal goals, personal objectives, personal desires, personal satisfaction, personal vindication falls.

The iniquity of his covetousness, it is a sin to pursue our agenda instead of fully committing and dedicating ourselves to God's plan and purpose. I will not contend forever. People tried their

way.

I have chastened them. There is a response. I see the error of my ways.

I repent. Turn ye at my reproof, so that you don't die, O house of Israel. You get reproved.

I learn. I learn obedience through suffering. The Lord Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered in his humanity.

You learn obedience through experience. You have it and you carry it forward. I was angry and struck him.

I hid and was angry, and he went on, backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and I will heal him. I will also lead him and restore comforts to him and to his mourners.

The gist of this, without doing a word-by-word study, is those who mourn. Remember the inkhorn angel in Ezekiel who, before God, judged Jerusalem, those who were sighing and crying, those who were mourning the Lord Jesus in the Beatitudes. Blessed are they who mourn, who recognize failure and shortcoming and are sorrowful about it, those who mourn.

God is going to rescue Israel and will not contend forever and will not judge forever for the sake of the mourners. For the sake of the fathers, God says, I will save Israel. It isn't that they're so great, but for the sake of these others, for the sake of the mourners, the final sorting is going to happen in the millennial kingdom.

And those who are brought back for the sake of the fathers and for the sake of the mourners, if they don't start to account for themselves, they're going to be permanently separated. I've seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will also lead him and restore comforts to him and his mourners because of those who repent, those who recognize the problem.

I create the fruit of the lips. There's going to be peace to him who is far off and to him who is near, who is far off and who is near. The mourners, the poor in spirit, are near.

I will dwell with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit. Those who are far off are going to get blessing by association. Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near, says the Lord, and I will heal.

I will heal them all for the sake of the few. But the wicked, if they are enjoying blessing and it doesn't turn them, it doesn't impress them, they don't change their heart and mind like the mourners have done, like the fathers did. And God has tried judgment and people didn't respond.

God is going to bring them back and try peace and restoration and healing. He has tried the stick and he's tried the carrot. Those that do not respond to either, the wicked are like the troubled sea that isn't satisfied.

It doesn't respond to rebuke and it doesn't respond to blessing. It doesn't respond to restoration. They're restless.

I want what I want. I don't like this God that punishes me when I don't do things his way and I don't accept his blessing and his healing as a sign of drawing and unity and relationship. I still want to go my own way.

Whether I'm far off or whether I'm near, I don't want this divine plan and program. I want what I want. The wicked are like the troubled sea.

When it cannot rest, God is going to bring Jacob into rest. He's going to restore all of Israel. All Israel will be delivered.

They're all going to be resuscitated and come back for the millennial kingdom. And yet there are those who, under the judgments of the Old Testament, didn't respond to God and were the cause of those judgments. And when they come back, they're still going to be Pharisees who reject and resist and will be in the darkness which is outside.

Peace and safety, destruction is going to come on them at the end. The Gog-Mage-Gog rebellion. Because those waters are troubled and all they do is stir up the silt, stir up the stuff that ought to be out of sight and out of mind.

They bring it to the surface. It's mud, it's mire and dirt. And those troubled waters, God can cleanse the waters.

God can calm the sea. But they are restless and they are going to stir it back up. And there is no peace.

What did God just say? I'm going to heal them for the sake of the mourners. I'm going to bring them peace. But they won't accept it.

They won't accept peace with God. They won't accept peace with each other. They won't recognize that God's way is the only way.

And there will be no peace for them ultimately. Even when God gives them peace, it's not satisfactory. Fascinating recognition of the wave of the sea that allows itself to be driven and isn't stabilized and anchored.

Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord. People insist in this postmodern day on trying to characterize hardship and suffering as self-induced. God wants the best for everyone.

And if they reject it, it's a self-inflicted wound. They're just hurting themselves and hurting each other. God would never judge.

Look at the bowl's judgment in Revelation on about chapter 15 or so, where the temple in

heaven is closed off. It's filled with smoke and the doors are shut. And the bowls of God's judgment are poured out.

And he will hear no plea because it is his wrath. The seven angels having the seven bowls of the wrath of God. God's wrath is poured out.

This isn't, oh, they just hurt themselves because they won't come to me. I'm an ironic God of love and peace. And if you reject me, you're just going to suffer on your own account.

God will judge. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of deliverance.

People that reject that, the ark will shut, the temple will shut, and the bowls of God's judgment will pour out. And we who are of salvation and in the fold and belong to God through Christ have to be reconciled to the fact that this is also God's judgment. God is righteous and holy and good.

He dwells in unapproachable light. And when he judges recalcitrant, disobedient, rebellious, unrepentant, sin of the high hand people for their rejection, it is necessary, it is righteous, and it is good. I am sure that it brings sorrow to God's heart to have to destroy those who will not accept or receive his mercy and grace.

It brings sorrow to our hearts, but we have to have peace about the policy of God that finds it necessary to cut the cancer out at a certain point so that it does not infect and destroy the entire body. And when it is our loved ones, when it is those about whom we care deeply, we have the humility and the contrition to recognize that God is right in what he does. God will go so far and no farther when there are those who do not accept his grace.

We can pray and pray regularly that God will make the issue clear, that God will confront and provide an opportunity, that Noah will travel the streets one more time and say, God's judgment is coming. It's going to be water. And I have built an ark at God's direction, invite you to come in and join us.

You can extend the invitation. Jonah went to Nineveh and preached the impending destruction for 40 days. And after 39 days, he went up on the hill to see what happened the next day.

Because there was repentance, God did not send destruction. And that made Jonah unhappy. We deliver the message.

We represent the message in our daily lives, in our attitudes, in our conduct, our conversation. And we want to be those who draw others, who have any appreciation at all for the light. We want to be a part of that drawing.

But if men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, we put the light on the lampstand, but we don't start shooting flaming arrows and seeing if we can get them to catch fire. Jesus said, put your light on a lampstand. Let your light so shine before men that they see

the goodness in your life and are drawn to God.

But if people love darkness rather than light, God has a purpose and a plan of which we are also a part. And we are not called to go and set fire to things, hoping that the light will somehow send someone in the direction of God. We are passive.

Even in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, the churches are lampstands. They are not messengers on horses with torches going about trying to light faraway corners. Churches are lampstands.

Those within the church are lights on a lampstand. It is an energy that flows outward from the lamp. The oil is the Holy Spirit.

The flame is the Word of God, the power of God, the glory of God. And God's plan, God's purpose, God's program is to draw. Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me.

No man can come to me except the Father draws him. If the concept of the Father, His character, His policy, His plan, His purpose, His righteousness, His justice, are off-putting to people, you can't come to Christ. Because if you don't like the Father, you are not going to like the Son.

And people who do not like the Son should not like us, because we should be like the Son. We represent Him. We speak for Him.

We live for Him. We are a presence in His stead. And those who reject the Lord Jesus ought to reject us.

If they don't, there's something wrong. Let him ask in faith. No other alternative in view.

This is the way. When I ask this of the Lord, He is going to grant it. Nothing doubting.

If I begin to think that, well, I know this God thing, this Christianity, but there are steps that people suggest. I saw a YouTube video and somebody said, try this. Use this line.

Try this technique. Employ this approach. You're a wave being driven by outside forces instead of a light shining from a stable place, from the high and holy place where God dwells in unapproachable light.

Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord. Notice, if you can't ask for wisdom with 100% confidence, you're not going to receive anything from the Lord. Now your provision is questionable.

Your safety is questionable. Whatever else God might grant by way of a wall of fire, by way of divine presence, divine power, Christian fellowship, all of that is now imperiled. Every good and perfect gift that's coming up.

Notice the integrity of this passage. This is still in the context of testing. We're asking for

wisdom because we're under the gun.

We're under pressure. Someone that doubts, that considers other methods, well, I'm going to pray and God helps those that help themselves. So I'll send up a prayer, but now I'm going to implement my plan.

Oh, Lord, please bless my way. You're not going to receive anything from the Lord. Certainly not the fulfillment of a request for wisdom, but all of the other things that flow from God are now in jeopardy.

Don't think you're going to receive. Well, even if I disobey, God will still not suffer me to be moved. If you're not righteous, your stability from the Lord is off the table.

You won't receive anything from the Lord. This is serious business. This asking for wisdom and living in its light.

If you begin to doubt or you've got two different ideas that you entertain, diakrino, I consider there are two ways. Remember in Exodus 20, verse 3, God spoke these words from Mount Sinai. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Verse 3, thou shalt have no other gods alongside me. There is one and only one God. It's not God and the teraphim.

It's not God and a little Baal. It's not God and Molech. It's not God and it is God period.

No other gods in the vicinity. It is similar here. God's way, God's wisdom, God's plan, God's purpose, God's program, God's priority, God's provision, God's in placing of pieces in circumstance at just the right time, just the right place with just the right amount of pressure on our faith is the only way.

No other gods with their agenda. No other plans and purposes. It is God and God alone.

Anyone who has another thought, another priority, another goal is, in verse 8, a double-minded man. This double-minded is a fascinating word because it isn't the word for mind. If you have two poles in ham radio, we have two branches of an antenna and so it's called a dipole.

If you have a dichotomy, something has been chotomized, it has been cut in two. Di means two of a thing, right? So two what? Double what? The word here is suche, p-s-u-c-h-e, two souls. He's a double-souled man.

James is going to return to use the word soul in the upcoming context. Our soul either belongs to God or it's divided. You've got a soul that you work for spiritual purposes but then your other soul goes out and navigates the world.

If we don't rely on God's wisdom and commit to it 100%, ask for it, nothing doubting, you're blown about by winds and waves. You're like a wave that is tossed and you are two-souled.

Jesus spoke about this.

Do you remember when he talked about the light of the body being the eye? It's in Matthew and it's in Luke. I'll look at it in Luke 11, 33. Jesus said, talking about the evil generation seeking a sign, well, maybe you're the Messiah but you need to prove it to me.

I've got an idea that maybe you're not. Double-minded, double-souled. I'll consider this but I'm not committed to it.

No sign is going to be given except the sign of Jonah. Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites. The Son of Man will be a sign to this generation.

The Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them. She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The wisdom of God imparted through Solomon.

She came from the ends of the earth. Notice the distance from Sheba is not the opposite side of the globe. Ends of the earth is limited by context.

She came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom. She was seeking the wisdom. That's what she was after.

Indeed, a greater than Solomon is here and you're not seeking the wisdom. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it. They repented when they heard the preaching of Jonah.

Indeed, a greater than Jonah is here and you are not repenting. You're not dedicating yourself to the pursuit of God's wisdom. No one, Jesus continues in verse 33 of Luke 11, no one when he has lit a lamp puts it in a hiding place or under a basket.

He puts it on a lampstand so that those who come in may see the light. So that those who come in, the light is put on the lampstand for the benefit of those who will enter. It's not even for the person's own benefit.

I put it on a lampstand so that others will be blessed. Others can see the lamp of the body is the eye. This is the intake gate.

We perceive light through our eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. You have a good eye.

You're full of light. In him is light. There is no darkness at all.

If your eye is bad, when your eye is bad, Jesus says, your body is full of darkness, faulty perception. You're looking in the wrong place. You're prioritizing the wrong thing.

You are a double-souled person. Your body is full of darkness. Therefore, Jesus says, take heed

that the light which is in you, which you consider to be illumination and wisdom, take heed, be careful that it isn't actually darkness.

That you're treating darkness as though it's light. You're walking according to darkness when you ought to be walking in the light. Verse 36.

If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, full of light, no darkness, single soul, not a double soul, not part light and part darkness, no compromise, no double soul, the whole body will be full of light as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light. You can see clearly. Remember Johnny, who was it, Johnny somebody saying, I can see clearly now.

This is our goal, to be single-souled, sold out, 100% committed to God's wisdom. I consider no other way. I want to be in the center of God's will, whatever it takes, whatever it entails, wherever that path leads, I am in.

I am 100% dedicated and I am asking God to give me that path, to give me that wisdom, to give me the strength, the understanding, the fruit of the spirit that will power me through whatever that entails. I want that and I want nothing else. Otherwise, God is not going to provide.

God isn't interested in the divided soul that is unstable in all of its ways. Notice how many all's there are in this. If anyone asks of God from the group of all, anyone who asks, God is going to grant, but you've got to have all faith, no doubt, not driven by circumstances, not a wave blown about, not a double soul that's got some light, but also entertains the darkness.

If you're in that latter category, you're unstable in all your ways, and you don't get anything from the Lord, even as a believer. What a tragedy, but what an opportunity for us to dedicate ourselves. Lord, send me into the thick of it.

I am ready. I've got my armor on, got my helmet, got my sword, got my shield, got my waist girded about, got my feet shod with the gospel of peace. Jesus said, my peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you.

And it's not like the world's peace. It's a peace that passes all understanding. It will keep our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

What an opportunity. Not a lot of believers have figured this out. Not a lot of people see it in the first chapter of James.

We see it, and it's our challenge in the hours and days ahead. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, what an opportunity you give us in Christ.

What an example you have provided for us in Christ. What a clear picture you paint for us in the mind of Christ, your word. We pray that as we reflect on these truths in the realm of our own circumstances and challenges, that your Holy Spirit will bring these things into clear and sharp relief, that we will have the wisdom that you give generously and without rebuke so that we can

be everything you want us to be now and in the days ahead.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We ask it in his name. Amen.