

- 1) In the next verses, James begins talking about wisdom.
- 2) Wisdom is not the idea of “knowledge” or in biblical times as some thought, the Stoic notion of “science.”
- 3) In fact, in the Hebrew mind, **it is the** concept of knowing how to conduct life in conformity with God’s Law – it is practical, not theoretical.
- 4) I love chapters 2 and 3 of Proverbs.
 - a) It is a treatise on the values and reasons we should pursue wisdom.
 - b) Here are the first few verses of chapter 2...

Proverbs 2:1–7 (NASB 2020)

The Pursuit of Wisdom Brings Security

- ¹ My son, if you will receive my words
And treasure my commandments within you,
 - ² Make your ear attentive to wisdom;
Incline your heart to understanding.
 - ³ For if you cry out for insight,
And raise your voice for understanding;
 - ⁴ If you seek her as silver
And search for her as for hidden treasures;
 - ⁵ Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,
And discover the knowledge of God.
 - ⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom;
From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.
 - ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to those who walk in integrity
- 5) As one reads further, we see the rewards of having God given wisdom and what happens if we seek a different way of living without that wisdom.
 - a) If you have a chance, it would be great to read that whole section (Chapters 2 and 3) as you think about what we are discussing.
 - 6) A little bible trivia...

Who was the most famous person in the OT who asked for wisdom?

2 Chronicles 1:9–12 (NASB 2020)

⁹ Now, Lord God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰ Now give me **wisdom** and knowledge, so that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?” ¹¹ Then God said to Solomon, “Because this was in your heart, and you did not ask for riches, wealth, or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor did you even ask for long life, but you asked for yourself **wisdom** and knowledge so that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, ¹²

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wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. I will also give you riches, wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed, nor *will* those who will come after you.”

- 7) If we apply our definition of wisdom to Solomon, I think we can see that he had that wisdom as demonstrated even in what he asked for.
- 8) God found his request pleasing to say the least.
- 9) So, let’s look at these next verses and what James tells us ...

James 1:5–8 (NASB 2020)

⁵But 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. ⁶But 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. ⁷For that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸*being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- 10) It is funny that James finished that last passage with “lacking in nothing” and begins in this passage looking at something we might be lacking – **wisdom**.
- 11) If I lack wisdom, and if we are correct in looking at it from the Hebrew mindset which says again...

... wisdom is the concept of knowing how to conduct life in conformity with God’s Law.

- 12) then this ties closely to a principle, we discussed in our Philippian study as well ...

Philippians 2:12b–13 (NASB 2020)

... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for *His* good pleasure.

- 13) As you hopefully recall, working out our own salvation is actually figuring out how to live our lives in a saved condition.
 - a) In other words – living the way God wants us to.
 - b) It is **not** figuring out how to be saved!

How do you think the acquiring of wisdom and working out our own salvation fit together?

- c) In light of what we have just said regarding wisdom being the concept of knowing how to conduct life in conformity with God’s Law – wisdom is an absolute integral part of working out our salvation.
 - d) Turning to God for guidance in living our lives – what His purpose is for us – must begin in obedience to His commands.
- 14) For me, it is really important for us to have this deep desire.
 - 15) All that being said, James throws a caveat into the mix ...

⁶But 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. ⁷For that person ought not to expect

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that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

16) So, we are back to the idea of faith defined as believing that God WILL!

17) I find what James says about those who do doubt very disturbing.

18) If doubting causes us not to receive anything – that is rather serious.

19) There are some varying opinions on what James means by the word “doubting.”

- a) Some think it is doubting that God can or will do what we ask.
- b) Others think it is a more serious doubting – a vacillation between believing in self and believing in God.
 - i) In context and in the sense of asking for wisdom, I have to say it is not doubting that God can **but** instead, doubting that He will provide what we are asking.

20) But in the bigger picture, the Hebrew writer actually encompasses both principles...

Hebrews 11:6 (NASB 2020)

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and *that* He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.

21) One thought I read said that our requests: “must be a request backed by genuine trust in God’s character, purpose, and promises.”⁵

22) The same writer indicated: “A request that does not take God at His word, that doubts either His ability or His trustworthiness, is presumptuous and worthless and is an affront.”⁴

What say you to these two statements – agree / disagree?

23) In the last verse of this passage, James says the doubter is “a double-minded man”

- a) *Dipsychos* (DI PSY COS) which literally means “double-souled” is a word that James used first in biblical writings.
 - i) Meaning simply that it is not found in scripture or in contemporary Greek literature before this letter.
 - ii) It is, however, used by others after James’ use – especially the church fathers when they refer to his works.

24) Looking at all that we have just discussed – and, reading James’ statement once more...

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 person ought not to expect

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 37.

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that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Is James telling us that if we doubt at all we might as well not pray or is there some wiggle room in his statement?

Any other comments / questions on any of this?

25) One obvious point to make here before we read these next verses is that this is going to be a typical pattern in this letter.

- a) Here we see a very abrupt and complete change of subject from
 - i) praying for wisdom and praying with and without faith
 - ii) to how poor and rich Christians are to view themselves and each other.
- b) A switch not unlike proverbs.

James 1:9–11 (NASB 2020)

⁹ Now the brother *or sister* of humble *circumstances* is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ but the rich person *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so also the rich person, in the midst of his pursuits, will die out.

- 1) Key to this passage is really understanding, in context, what the two words which are most often translated *humble* and *high position* or *exalted* really mean.
 - a) The word for *humble* in this context means “*insignificant in the world’s eyes, lowly, relatively poor and powerless, lacking in material possessions.*”
 - b) “*High position*” for the “humble” Christian in context would mean the *position they maintain in the eyes of their Savior and God.*
 - i) They are worthy, exalted, and God’s children; what higher position can one have than that?
- 2) James immediately turns to the rich person – the one on the opposite end of the socioeconomic scale

– they must glory in their humiliation.

- a) Looking to a definition of humiliation from the Greek again, we find “*experience of a reversal in fortunes.*”
 - i) One way to look at this is a leveling of the playing field so to speak.
 - ii) Before becoming a Christian, the rich person gloried in their riches – that was what they were about.
 - iii) On becoming a Christian, that attitude must change.
 - (1) Their riches must not mean that much to them anymore.
 - (2) The most important thing they have is no longer their wealth.

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- (a) It is the exact same thing the person of humble circumstance has – their worth in the eyes of their Savior and God.
- 3) No further explanation would need to be given to the poor person – it would be self-evident.
- 4) However, verse 11 adds a comment for the rich person who might not quite get the message.
 - a) James says: “its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so also the rich person, in the midst of his pursuits, will die out.”
 - b) In this there is the aspect of the rich person not continuing in their pursuit of riches because that is not as important as it once was.
 - i) Again, this speaks to a required shift in viewpoints regarding their riches and gaining more wealth.
 - ii) If they do not make the transition then it will eventually be their demise as a Christian.
 - c) Beyond that, there is the idea of, “you can’t take it with you” so, if you think otherwise, you might consider how everything else fades away.
- 5) I think the New Living Translation does a good job of capturing the essence of all this...

James 1:9–10 (NLT)

- ⁹ Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them.
- ¹⁰ And those who are rich should boast that God has humbled them. They will fade away like a little flower in the field.
- 6) The true intended result here is to get these brothers and sisters to see themselves in the proper light and to see each other as family – as children of God.
 - 7) Regardless of their monetary status or place in the social order, God sees them all the same.
 - a) AND – it is vital that they see and treat each other in that same way – rich not looking down on poor or less fortunate – poor not raising the rich to a higher place.
 - b) James will return to this thought in the first verses of chapter 2.
 - 8) So, the obvious question for us might be...

So first, where do we fall on the scale between poor and rich?

Is the apparent difference James is speaking of a problem for congregations today?

Specifically, do we see this as an issue here at Altamesa?

If yes – Why?

If no – Why not?