

Wisdom in Trials

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Date: 21 September 2008

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Turn to James 1, and I'll read the first eight verses in your hearing.! James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, He should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. Be helpful if you have your Bible open to James 1 this morning.

We come to a very famous, well-known Scripture verse, James 1, 5, if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

One of the benefits of preaching through a book of the Bible is that we get to see these famous verses in their context. And the context will shine more light upon that verse that we love so well.

[1:32] That's the way it is with James 1 and verse 5. It's kind of like having a photograph. And in the photograph are many people, and they're all interacting and doing all sorts of things, and you come along with your scissors, and you cut out one person.

Now, you can study that one person and learn many things about them, but how much more do you learn about them when you put it back in the picture, and you see them in relation to all the things that are going on around them.

So it is with James 1 and verse 5. And I trust that the Lord will use the context to pour fresh meaning into this verse that perhaps we've known for a long time.

James has been talking about trials. And it is in the context of trials that he brings up this topic of wisdom.

What are the last three words of verse 4? Not lacking anything. Now that's God's aim in sending us trials.

[2:33] He sends trials with the end goal of being without lacking anything. So that the trying of your faith develops perseverance, and perseverance finishes its work until you're complete, mature, complete, not lacking anything.

Not lacking anything. What are the first words of verse 5? But if any of you lacks wisdom. The aim is to not lack anything.

But if any of you lacks wisdom. In other words, we're not there yet, are we? And James knows it. And God the Holy Spirit knows it. And the lesson that we need to learn right off the bat is that trials have a way of confronting us with our lack of wisdom.

Trials have a way of confronting us. Trials have a way of confronting us with the reality that we're not to the end goal of trials yet. Now this word lack is a banking term.

It means a shortage. Not enough. A lot of people are experiencing shortages today in the terms of banking.

[3:50] That's the word here. If any of you lacks wisdom. Trials show up our shortage of wisdom. You'll need a whole lot of wisdom to handle trials in a holy way.

Haven't you found that? That trials leave us bewildered. Confused. Not knowing what to do. And yet they leave us in a situation where decisions are demanded of us.

We must make a decision. Action is required. Maybe it's a health problem. That's your trial. But now you have a decision to make.

What kind of treatment are you going to choose? Maybe it's some loss. A job. A spouse. And you're left reeling. Where do I go from here? What do I do next?

Maybe it's a problem with the kids. And you say, how should I discipline in this situation? Problem with aging parents. How to respond to them. What to do now?

[4:55] Haven't you found that trials seem to be intentionally designed to show how lacking we are in wisdom? Proving once again that it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps.

Jeremiah 10.23 Trials require wisdom to handle them aright. So James says, if any of you lack wisdom.

And we say, if. That's exactly what I lack. Well, it's an if. Not if perchance anybody out there could need wisdom in trial.

No, it's a first class conditional statement that assumes that it's so. James knows that we will need wisdom in trials. So he says, if any of you lack, then here's what you do.

So our trials reveal our shortage. And our shortage is wisdom. What is wisdom? It's more than just knowledge. It's more than just facts. We've all known people with high IQs that get straight A's that are totally inept and unable to deal with life's trials.

[6:05] No, that's not wisdom. Smart people can be totally void of wisdom. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It's the practical use of knowledge. Think of the book of Proverbs that set forth wisdom's way of living.

That's what wisdom is. It's seeing. It's knowing God's will and knowing how to apply it in your life. It's seeing circumstances from God's point of view and responding accordingly.

Living with his interpretation of your reality. And so God's perspective is that trials are for my good.

And so wisdom will say trials are for my good.

It's the ability to make right decisions, to take the proper action in the midst of trials. It's knowing how to avoid the dozens of sinful pitfalls along the way of trials.

The ability to face the trial in a holy way and to come out victorious in the end, more holy for having gone through it. Wisdom. In summary, in this context, wisdom is everything that you need to handle trials properly.

[7:22] So anyone here need help remaining joyful in trials? How many times this week did you say consider it pure joy? Consider it pure joy.

Consider it pure joy. Did you find it easy to consider it pure joy? And if you have trouble remaining joyful in trials, patient in trials, trusting in trials, expecting in trials, becoming more holy in trials.

Well, you need wisdom. Wisdom leads us down the path that leads to holiness. But we need a different kind of wisdom than our own, don't we?

If we're to know what's best for us in trials, we just want out. But God has higher ends in mind, so we need his wisdom. Our wisdom says there's nothing good in this.

God's wisdom says there is something good in it or it wouldn't be in your life, John. And so I dare not lean on my own understanding, my own wisdom.

[8:22] But I must trust in him and I need his wisdom. So the shortage is wisdom. What's the answer? The answer to our shortage is to ask God for wisdom.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God. Doesn't that make sense? That if it's wisdom that we lack, that we should go directly to the all wise God and ask him for it.

That we should come to him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and ask to be made wise. He's got what we need.

We need wisdom. Notice what it is we're to ask for in trials. It's wisdom. Matthew Henry says we should not pray so much for the removal of the trial as for wisdom to make a right use of the trial. Interesting. Again, we see God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Our first prayer is get me out. God says when you are in trials and you lack wisdom, ask me for wisdom.

[9:34] Now here we have, first of all, a command to ask. It is an imperative. It's one of those 50 imperatives found in the letter. It's a command.

It's a present tense that emphasizes the continuous action. Ask and keep on asking is the sense of it. Don't quit asking for wisdom. And if life is one long string of trials that one is barely over, then another starts and sometimes they overlap.

Is it not true that the Christian should never be for long without asking for wisdom? Go on asking for wisdom. Lord, give me wisdom today, enabling me to respond in trials, in joy and in a way that will grow in holiness.

So the answer for our lack of wisdom is prayer. Now this is the first of several references to prayer in the letter. James has a lot to say about prayer.

But this reference to prayer teaches us that a healthy prayer life in trials is a key part of the pursuit of holiness. The whole theme of the book is to pursue holiness.

[10:44] And here in trials we find out that a healthy prayer life is absolutely essential in the pursuit of holiness. Ask. Pray. So we run after holiness on our knees.

Because trials are meant to bring us to God. And trials have done one of its most important works if it has brought us to God in prayer.

Cooper says, trials make the promise sweet. Trials give new life to prayer. Trials bring me to his feet. Lay me low and keep me there. Have your trials brought you to Jesus' feet?

As your present trial brought you to Jesus' feet? And kept you there? Lord, wisdom. I need wisdom in this thing. I lack it. Spreading your insufficiency before him and asking him for wisdom.

And so we must view our trials as a call to prayer. It's a call to ask. We've talked about the Muslims who five times a day are called to prayer. The faithful are called to prayer.

[11:55] That squeaky loud speaker and the voice that squeals through the town calling the faithful to prayer. It could be that even more than five times a day we are called to prayer.

Trial after trial bombards us. Each one calling us to pray. If in your trial you lack wisdom, ask. Ask. Pray. What a privilege to go directly to the all-wise God through Jesus Christ with our request and need for wisdom.

The whole thing is beautifully illustrated in King Jehoshaphat back in 2 Chronicles 20. A vast army from Edom, a whole coalition of armies, has come to make war against Judah.

And the trial revealed his lack of wisdom. He's alarmed. But he resolves to inquire of the Lord.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask. And so he inquires of the Lord. And he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. And they all came together to seek help from the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood before the assembly and prayed as the voice of the people and concluded his prayer this way.

[13:08] We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do. But our eyes are upon you. Do you see it?

We do not know what to do. That's I lack wisdom. But our eyes are upon you. That's asking and expecting God to act on their behalf.

The trial brought them to God in prayer. And God answered that prayer with wisdom and what to do and victory that stemmed from it. So how hot in pursuit are we after holiness?

What does your prayer life say about how hot your pursuit of holiness is? Are you praying? God, give me the wisdom that leads to holiness in this trial.

God, make me wise in this thing so that I will persevere growing in holiness. Well, that's the command to pray. But we're not only given a command to ask.

[14:13] We're also given encouragement to ask. And this is James' way of dealing with us. Command, encouragement. Command, reason. Here's the encouragement. It grows out of the character of God and out of the promise of God.

First, the character of God. Notice how James refers to God. He should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault. He's out to convince us of God's giving disposition. His willingness to give us wisdom. He giveth and giveth and giveth again. And he does it wholeheartedly without any reluctance.

Without finding fault. In other words, when we come asking for wisdom the tenth time, he doesn't say, oh, not you again.

I just gave you wisdom yesterday. What's the matter with you? You can't figure this out on your own? Well, I've got wisdom, but you ought to do better. He doesn't chide us. He doesn't upbraid us for asking.

[15:17] Never. And our problem then is that we tend to think of God as we think of men. Because men do give with reluctance.

And men do chide us for asking, don't they? They do give with grumbling. No, I can't believe you're in need again. And if they've given once, they often use that as a reason to beg off giving again. Well, I gave at the office. As if that relieves you of any responsibility to give again. Now, to be sure, we have limited resources. And in that, we differ from God. But the point is, as we think of men that way, we feel our own sense that if someone just kept coming and asking and asking and asking, we would get tired of their asking.

And we're tempted to think of God in terms of men. And James is saying, don't do that. He's not like us. He gives generously to all without finding fault. Nothing will stop you quicker from asking God again for wisdom than thinking that God is like you.

So be sure you have the right view of God's character. He delights to give. He would say, I'm here for you, child.

[16 : 36] Make use of me. He wants to give. It's something he likes to do. He's the one who says it's better to give than to receive. He takes pleasure in giving wisdom over and over and over again.

After all, he gave us his son for our greatest need. Will he not now give us wisdom in order to make us holy? Oh, think of God's delight in giving wisdom again and again.

If wisdom is what we need in order to progress in trials toward holiness, why would God ever withhold wisdom when we come asking it? He wants us holy far more than we want to be holy.

And so, yes, he'll give us the wisdom that's needed to respond and grow in holiness through our trials. If I tell my son to rake the backyard and he comes to me and he says, Dad, I don't have what it takes.

Will you please give me a rake? Am I going to be upset with him? Am I going to upbraid him and chide him and find fault in him for asking me for a rake? No, I would gladly give him the rake because the rake will help him to do what I want him to do, which is to rake the yard.

[17 : 53] Will God, who wants you to be holy, who has planned for you to be in such a holy condition one day that you will be not lacking anything? Will he chide you when you come asking for the rake, the wisdom that you need to make you holy in trials, to progress in holiness?

Of course not. He delights to give wisdom because wisdom leads to holiness. And if he never tires of giving, let us never tire of asking.

The more we come, the more welcome we are. Now, that's just opposite of humans. The more we come, the more weary they get of us coming. But you must not have that view of God.

James wants us to be encouraged to ask by seeing the nature and character of God. The more you come, the more willing and welcome you are to come. And then he would encourage us not only with the character of God, but the promise of God for all who ask for wisdom in trials.

And it will be given to him. It will be given to him. Now, you can't help but hear the echo in James' words of his older brother, Jesus, who on the Sermon on the Mount said to those on the mountain, Ask, and it will be given to him.

[19 : 14] And here James is saying, you in your trial, if you need wisdom, you ask and it will be given to you. So know this, the promise from a faithful God is as good as the thing itself.

No one seeks God in vain for wisdom. Here's the promise. And oh, how lightly we think of the promises. This God of truth has gone on record to say, if you ask, he'll give.

He would have to un-God himself to not keep his word. He'd have to become something less than God to not come through. Do you realize how sure the promise is?

And may that encourage you to come and ask. In all your trials, wisdom is to be had just for the asking, as often as you please. Is that not cause for pure joy, my brothers?

Whenever you face trials of many kind that show up your lack of wisdom. I don't have what I need in trials. But God does.

[20 : 21] And he's willing. He's happy to give me his wisdom. I'm not meant to sweat it out alone. I'm not meant to just sit there in the back room saying, John, consider it all joy.

Consider it pure joy. Consider it pure joy. No, I have a God who can give me wisdom to see this thing like he does, so that I will consider it pure joy. The two go together.

My need for wisdom should send me to the one who gives it, that I might find it. Not working out my own solutions to the trial. Not sweating it out alone, but just coming to him and asking, as a child to the Father.

History records that James had calluses on his knees like those of a camel, because he was found so often asking. Asking.

He knows whereof he speaks. He's been in trials. He's seen his own lack of wisdom. And he's been to the throne of grace, and he has found God to be very generous, without finding fault, to be the great giver that he is.

[21 : 26] And so James hangs a sign over the throne of grace, and it says, Wisdom dispensed here, free for the taking, free for the asking. Come and ask in the midst of your trial.

We're given a command to ask for wisdom. We're given encouragement to ask. God's character, his giving character and his promise. And thirdly, we're given instruction on how to ask.

On how to ask. You see, James places a condition on our asking. It must be the right kind of asking.

There's a right way to ask, and there's a wrong way to ask. He's going to bring up another wrong way when he comes to chapter 4, that you just might consume it upon your own lusts and desires. But now he's going to show us the right way to ask and the wrong way to ask.

You see, the manner in which you ask is so important that it makes the difference between whether you receive or whether you don't receive from God. That's important. So, don't just rest satisfied that in the trial you prayed, no.

[22 : 38] What kind of prayer was it? How did you ask? We must go further and ask that question. Here, God gives us instruction on how to ask. Verse 6a. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt.

There it is. He says it twice. First in the positive, second in the negative. We must ask like this, not like that. And what is it?

What's the right way to ask? Well, we must believe and not doubt. Positively, we must believe. We must ask in faith. We must trust that God will give it.

Faith is the very foundational condition of all true prayer. Hebrews 11, 6 says that without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Because anyone who comes to him must believe, must have faith that he exists and that he is the rewarder of those who earnestly seek him. Without faith, there is no prayer.

[23 : 37] So when you ask God for wisdom, you must believe that he exists, he's there to hear your prayer, and second, that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. That he will give it to you just as he promised.

Faith rests on the right thoughts about God, his character, his promise. Faith relies on his generosity and largeness of heart to give.

Faith must believe that he's willing to give wisdom. I must believe that he's able to give wisdom to me right now in this trial. I must believe that he's too faithful to break any of his promises.

So this one, it's just taking him at his word. God said he'd give wisdom if you asked, and you come and you take him at his word.

And so we must expect to see it done. James is telling us that even while we're asking, we must have thoughts of receiving. We must believe that he will give it to us.

[24 : 44] Everything that we need in our trial, this wisdom to respond in a holy way. When he asks, he must believe. But secondly, not doubt.

That's the negative way of saying the same thing. What is faith? It's not doubting. What is believing? It's not doubting. We must not doubt the promises of God to give wisdom in trials to all that ask.

We must not doubt the character of God. To doubt God's keeping of this promise is to doubt his character of being faithful.

It's to cast a question. You know, you can't always count on God to keep his promise. That's what it means to doubt. Yes, I know he promised, but you can't count on him. He sometimes promises and doesn't keep him.

That's what we're saying by doubting. He can't be trusted. You see, our doubts of unbelief are more serious than we have thought. There really are only two options here in James' mind.

[25 : 45] There's believing and there's doubting. Embrace the promise in faith or rebel in unbelief and doubt. There's no middle ground for James.

It's one or the other. And when you're believing, you're not doubting. When you're doubting, you're not believing. Again, the words of James' older brother can be heard here.

Mark 11, 22 and 23. Have faith in God, Jesus answered. I tell you the truth. If anyone says to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Not doubting, but believing. James just reverses it. Believing, not doubting. That's the right way to ask for wisdom.

There's absolutely no room for wicked unbelief and doubts when the promise of God stands before me. Has God made a promise so simple and plain that in the context of trials, if I lack wisdom and I come and ask him, he will give it.

[26 : 55] I must not doubt it. I must, even as I pray, expect God to arrive with the wisdom that I need. Paul comments in Romans 4 on Abraham's response to God's promise when God says, you're going to be the father of many nations.

He had a promise. What was his response? Romans 4, 19 to 21. Without weakening in faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

Yet he did not waver. He did not waver. He did not doubt through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that what God had power to do, that God had power to do what he had promised.

So in your trial, God has promised wisdom for those who ask and face. So go to him and ask and believe that he will give it. That means that if we've asked him, we should come away from the throne of grace with a different disposition than when we came.

The trial showed us our lack of faith and we come sensing our lack of faith. Lord, I don't have what it takes. Please give it. If we ask believing, not doubting, when we leave the throne of grace, we should be going away thanking God, expecting to see the help.

[28 : 23] Not paralyzed in fear, but moving on now, expecting the help to be there when we need it. That's the right way we're to ask for wisdom.

When he asks, verse 6, he must believe and not doubt. Now we're given a helpful illustration of the doubting man. What does the doubting man look like?

Well, because he who doubts, verse 6b, he is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind. Can you see that wave on the stormy sea? There it's being blown. First up and then down.

Back and forth. This way, that way. It's going nowhere. It's just foaming, breaking, battered about by the contrary winds of the storm.

Perfect picture of instability, wavering. That's the picture of the man who doubts when he asks God for wisdom.

[29 : 23] The wavering man is like a wave that is tossed by the wind. He's carried along by outside circumstances and blowing influences.

One moment he's believing, the next moment he's doubting. One moment he's wanting wisdom, the next moment he's wanting out. One moment he's wanting God's will, next minute wanting his own will. One time God's way, then the world's way.

Wave of the sea. That's the picture, the illustration of the doubting man. Thirdly, we're given further description of this doubting man in verse 8.

And it shows us what's behind his doubt. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Alright, so, what did we see first?

He doesn't ask for wisdom. He asks for wisdom. We have to hand him that much. In his trials, he, oh, I don't have enough wisdom. He asks God. But he doubts rather than believes. And so he's like this wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

[30 : 26] And now we're told he's a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Verse 8. All he does. You see, his instability in this one area of believing prayer is indicative of a double-mindedness that is shot through the hole of this man.

It makes him unstable, not just when he's praying, but when he's working, when he's doing family life, when he's doing church life, when he's doing anything he does.

In all he does, he's unstable in all his ways. That's quite a word, double-minded. It means of two minds. We've got one mind, but you understand what he means when he says this person is double-minded.

This doubting man can't make up his mind. He's divided at the very core of his being. One commentator says he's a walking civil war.

He's on one side, and then he's on the other side. Partly for God, partly for self. He's Bunyan's Mr. Facing both ways. He's a fence straddler, one foot for God, the other for the world.

[31 : 36] He's undecided, like an undecided voter. One moment for Obama, the next moment for McCain. He can't make up his mind. One moment for God, one moment for me.

He's double-minded, and that's why even in his prayers you find him wavering back and forth, wanting wisdom. Oh, but only if it fits and suits what he wants wisdom to look like in his trial.

And this double-mindedness at the core is the cause of his continuous wavering and doubting. He's not sure that he really wants God's wisdom that leads to holiness. He loves his sins too much for that.

So even his prayers, are insincere. He's double-minded. He's wavering. Does he really want it or doesn't he? Only God knows.

And James says sometimes he really doesn't want wisdom's way at all, even though he's asking for wisdom. His prayer for wisdom is like Augustine's useless prayer.

[32:46] Augustine, so greatly used by God in the early church. But before he was converted, his life was sunk in sexual immorality.

And yet, in his confessions, he talks of praying in his sin. This was his prayer. Oh Lord, grant me purity, but not yet.

Is he sincere in asking or isn't he? Does he want purity or doesn't he? But not yet. Since he's double-minded. Yes, he wants purity or he wouldn't be praying.

But he says not yet. It means he doesn't want it after all. He's not that passionate in pursuing holiness. And so this man, he's in trial. And he sees his lack of wisdom.

He says, Lord, give me wisdom. But he's doubting. And James says, if you look beneath that doubt, you'll find double-mindedness. There's a part of him. I don't want that kind of wisdom that will lead to holiness in this trial.

[34:04] He's never got off the fence. He's never given himself over decisively. to God. No longer my own to decide how to live. I am the Lord's.

The decision is his. I must obey his word. He's never taken sides in the battle between God and the world. He's Mr. Have-it-both-ways. And so instability continues to mar and mark his life and his prayers.

His praying for wisdom lacks sincerity. God's sincere and promising to give wisdom to those who ask, but he's not sincere in his asking. He's like the Israelites in Jeremiah 42.

They were facing a great trial. Babylon was ruling over them and Babylon had set up the rulers for the land. And then some Israelites killed the leaders that the Babylonians had set up to rule over them.

And now all of Israel is scared to death. What's Babylon going to do? They're going to come and wipe us out. So let's run down to Egypt. Oh, but it would be good to inquire of the Lord.

[35:09] It would be good to ask wisdom from God. So they came to Jeremiah. And they said to Jeremiah, you pray to the Lord to show us the way we should go and the thing we should do and whatever he says we will do.

and we say that's what I want to do in trials. I want to see my lack of wisdom and come and say Lord, show me the way the thing to do how to respond in this trial and whatever you show me I will do.

It looks good. But they no more wanted God's wisdom than Augustine wanted God's purity.

Because Jeremiah goes to the Lord and the Lord's answer is don't go down to Egypt.

Stay in the land and I will protect you. And then they showed they had no interest at all in God's wisdom. They went down to Egypt. Hightailed it for Egypt.

Oh, but they were so flowery in their request of God showing them the way to go. That's the man that James has in mind when he says he wavers. He does.

[36:11] He doubts because he's double-minded. He's divided at the very core of his being. And so insincere askers of wisdom only want it if it fits with their way.

Now that's an issue then that confronts us in any trial, I say. Do you really want wisdom to see your trial as God does? Do you really want wisdom to behave in trial wisdom's way?

Do you really want his wisdom to learn holiness in your trial? Are you just saying so because it's Sunday or it's the right thing to say? God knows the heart and a double-minded heart is an affront to God.

A heart that questions him, that doubts him, that rejects and ignores his word whenever it doesn't fit with their own ideas and desires.

It's divided loyalties. Elijah faced the double-minded on Mount Carmel. there was Israel vacillating between God and Baal like a wave of the sea.

[37:20] Part for God and part for Baal. That was the Israelite of the day. And Elijah stands before them and says, how long will you waver between two opinions?

If the Lord is God then follow him. If Baal is God then follow him. But get off the fence. Quit trying to serve God and Baal.

Quit being double-minded. And James is much like the spirit of Elijah. And he will say in James 4 and verse 8, purify your hearts, you double-minded.

You must deal with this double-mindedness. And I wonder if there's some here this morning who are still on the fence. One foot in the church and one in the world. And you're still straddling. And you're double-minded and there's times when you think, I need to follow Christ. And there's other times, I want to follow the world. And you've never decisively thrown your lot in with Christ.

[38:23] You need to confess the greatness of your sin for treating God as if the world is on equal par with him. And you're really not sure which one should have your loyalties.

praise. Oh, seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he's near. But seek him with all your heart. No divided heart.

No more duplicity. So that when you're in trials, you may ask for wisdom with faith, not doubting, with singleness of mind that says, above all else, I want your will and way in this trial.

I want to walk in wisdom's way. I want to grow in holiness. I want your wisdom to remember and apply your holy word that makes the simple wise. I don't want the easy way out. I want the right way through.

Give me wisdom in this trial according to your promise. And so we take up the promise in our hands and we present it before God and we expect to receive his wisdom.

[39:23] And so we receive. But the double-minded who doubt and waver in their asking are met with a disqualification from receiving. That's the third thing.

There's a disqualification here. Third or fourth. I'm not sure what my numbering is. But there's a disqualification here. You know what a DQ is, kids? It's not a Dairy Queen. It's a disqualification from the race.

You're DQ'd. Here's a disqualification for the doubting man. That man. What man? Well, that doubting man, that double-minded man who doubts when he asks.

He's not that sincere in asking. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. He asks, but don't let him think for a minute that he will receive.

His unbelieving duplicity has disqualified him from receiving, and he's got only himself to blame because God's promise is true, and if he would just come and ask with faith, God would give it to him.

[40:28] last month in the Olympic men's 200-meter sprint, Jamaica's Usain Bolt won that event in world-record time.

But the next two men to cross the finish line ran faster than all the others behind them. They finished the race in second and third, but they did not receive the silver and the gold medals. They had stepped out of their lanes as they were running around the bend, and so they were disqualified from receiving.

They ran, but they did not receive. Even so, here is a man who asks, but he does not receive. Why? He's disqualified.

Because when he asked, he doubted in his double-mindedness, let that man not think that he will receive anything from the Lord.

[41:35] From the Lord. Notice that wisdom and everything else that we receive is from the Lord. The Lord Jesus, his merit alone earns the gracious gifts given.

So whatever you come away with from the throne of grace, you must always know it's grace. It's all we ever get from there. We receive it from the Lord. We come to him, and we owe it all to the Lord Jesus, who by his life and death and resurrection and ascension has opened up the treasures of heaven to us.

All the wisdom we need, we just come and get it through Christ. Wisdom. All we need for life and godliness, for trials now, for eternal life to come.

So if any of you lack wisdom in trials, ask God. And be sure when you do, that you ask believing, because you have a promise from the God who cannot lie, and you will receive it.

Have you ever been in a maze? I don't mean being in amazement, but being in a maze. Some of you kids play the little mazes with a pencil, start here, end here, and you've got to follow your way all the way to the end.

[42:57] Have you ever been in one of those? Life-size maze. I remember being in one, in the hedges, it was just grass and hedges, and they were so tall you couldn't see over them, and they were so thick you couldn't see through them.

All you could see was a few steps in front of you, and then the turn, and you follow the turn, go a few steps, and then another turn, and then inevitably you'd come to a choice, and you'd wonder, does the way left lead to a dead end, or does it lead to the way out, or is it the way to the right that leads to the way out, and we're perplexed, and we don't know what to do.

that's like the mazes of trials in our lives, and we're brought in our trials to these perplexities.

What am I to do now? How am I to respond in this? How am I ever to count it all joy? And there we stand. Well, we don't need to stand there on our own, and lean on our own understanding, or be paralyzed with doubts and fears.

God has wisdom for us. He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. Well, you can see quite clearly the end from the beginning, and He has wisdom to give to everyone who asks.

[44:16] So let's ask, and let's believe that He's no liar, but He is the God of truth, and we will experience wisdom in our trials.

Help to walk in wisdom's way when we feel so in over our heads in our trials. Knowing His superior wisdom, we gladly ask Him to choose the way for me.

I would not choose if I could. I cannot tell where these roads lead. You choose for me. You be my guide, my strength, my wisdom, and my all.

If you're straddling the fence, double-minded, I invite you to Jesus and to single-mindedness in Him. If you're a believer, yes, you've thrown your lot in with Christ, but you find your heart struggling, being single-minded and wanting what He wants. Pray with me, unite my heart, unite it, to fear your name.

[45:22] Let's pray. Thank You, Lord, that You know our situation in life. Indeed, all the trials, if we would trace them back, come from Your hand.

And we thank You that You also know our insufficiency in facing those trials, and so You promise us wisdom if we will but ask in faith or forgive our unbelief.

Help us. We believe, oh, help our unbelief. And help us to believe with such steadfastness and unwavering faith as is worthy of a promise from a God who cannot lie.

So help us to glorify Your promise and glorify Your faithfulness by believing prayer. And we will expect, Lord, that in the midst of our trials, again this week, that as we turn to You, You will hear us and answer us.

Thank You for Your gracious heart to us. We ask it all through the merits of our Savior, who's won for us every bit of wisdom and every bit of help from the throne of grace, even Jesus.

[46:38] amen. Amen.