

Scripture Reference: James 1:5-8

Date: July 21, 2013

Title: "Taking God at His Word"

Focus: Believing God in what He says.

Intro:

1. The book of James probably has one of the most interesting openings of any letter in the Bible. It says, "*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy*" (James 1:2 NLT).

2. Who upon reading this is not tempted to say, "What! Are you out of your mind!!" For in our way of thinking, "troubles" and "great joy" are indeed strange bedfellows

3. God understands that, which is why immediately after James' statement, God invited questions on the matters a child of His faces.

Body:

"if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God"

If people don't understand what is taking place, they can't comprehend how trials can lead to being, "*perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (1:4)? What's a person to do? Ask God.

Don't try to figure it out on your own. God's ways are not man's (Isa 55:8-9). The practices of The Kingdom are unlike those of this domain (2 Cor. 10:4).

A person should neither seek an ultimate answer from a fellow pilgrim. They may know no more about what God is doing than you.

"Aslan is on the Move."

This is a quote from C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. The book is an allegorical tale about God and creation; Aslan is a great lion that is the rightful king of Narnia. This comment introduces his character and his move to defeat the witch of Narnia.

What Lewis recognized is that God is at work in His creation and in the lives of His children. This is not a readily acknowledged fact today.

"Dear brothers and sisters," James was encouraging followers of Jesus to accept events as God's working in or through them to His glory, not merely as things that happen.

When a disciple comes in search of understanding, God's response is three fold (v. 5b):

1. God gives an answer.
2. God responds "*generously.*"
3. He doesn't criticize, rebuke, or chasten His child for asking.

"But...."

Some would immediately reply, "Wait a minute, I've asked and not found this to be true!"

Notice what else James says; the promise of an answer is conditioned upon the state of the person asking:

1. *"He [or she] must ask in faith without any doubting..."*

- We take this to say, the person asking needs to have faith for an answer. That would make the answer the object of your faith.

- Rather, James is saying the faith presented needs to be in God, the giver of the answer, not the outcome.

Hebrews 1:6 is key to understanding this verse. *"without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. "*

The reason this promise is directed to *"brothers and sisters"* is that non-believers have no trust in God.

The understanding people seek is grounded in trusting a personal God who is engaged in one's life.

If there is no relationship with God, there can be no trust. A person will not trust a God they do not know.

2. The one who asked and "*who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.*"

- When a person is not trusting in God, any and every movement becomes a *sign*. Rather than listening for the voice of the God they know, they look for indicators.

- This leads to them being blown here and there, as the situation seems to indicate.

3. "*that man [or woman] ought not to expect that he [or she] will receive anything from the Lord.*"

- Trusting circumstances rather than God is trying to deduce what God is doing using human clues. The wrong key is being used.

"A double-minded man [or woman], [is] unstable in all his [or her] ways."

People who try to walk with their focus in two places, stagger. Their perception is off and so is their progress.

Those who claim to be followers of The King, but who walk with one eye on Him (asking His direction) and the other looking to the world for clues, are going to stumble through life.

Stability is found when the disciple places confidence solely in who God is and nothing else.

Closing:

1. God does move in ways that are mysterious, to us at least.
2. Every movement in the life of a disciple is to be predicated upon trust in God.
3. Anything less results in the “one step forward, two steps back” type of Christianity that is often witnessed.