



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## Kerang

### FAITH AND DEEDS

#### A BIBLE STUDY FROM JAMES

#### HOW TO BE VICTORIOUS IN TIMES OF TRAILS – UNWAVERING PRAYER

##### READ JAMES 1:2-18

The paragraph under consideration is verses 5-8. Read this paragraph by yourself and formulate what you think this means. Break it up in shorter statements.

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The structure of James 1 up to this point is:

- James the pastor of the church in Jerusalem is writing to the scattered members of his and other churches
- James serves God and the Lord Jesus Christ – he knows by experience to live in obedience to his Master
- Stephen was stoned and the Christians in Jerusalem were persecuted for their faith.
- The people have lost about all they had and are now facing completely different circumstances where they had to live out their faith in God
- These circumstances come to them as trials
- God's purpose with the trails is to test their faith which leads to purification
- The whole process of testing is aimed at them growing up and becoming mature followers of Christ

At this point now James instructs then how to deal with trails: *the persecuted Christian does not have all the answers, but must live to glorify God. How is this done? How do they get the answers?*

The Psalmist was probably in a group of Israelites taken into captivity, now on their way to Babylon. At the spot in the northern mountains where the Jordan River originated, they paused – he saw the waves of the waters and this, he said, is what is going on in his heart and mind. All along, the unbelieving Babylonian soldiers kept asking him: “Where is your God now?” How does he feel when they kept mocking him? Could he give the answers? *READ PSALM 42:9-10.*

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*READ JAMES 1:5.* The context is how to deal with trials when the Christian faces adverse circumstances because he/she chooses to serve God. What should the Christ do in such circumstances?

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The word “wisdom”, as in many other places in the Bible, does not refer to scientific knowledge, or even to knowledge in the sense of adding up facts. The word has in mind *skills* in the affairs of life, *practical* wisdom, wise management as shown in forming the *best plans*, and selecting the *best means*, including the idea of *sound judgment* and good sense.

READ PROVERBS 2:1-6. What happens when the child of God calls to him for wisdom (more specifically verses 5-6)?

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Let's be practical: You live in a country where, all of a sudden, you are persecuted for being a Christian. You lose your belongings, you have to change address, you lose your friends, and getting another job is hard. There are others Christians around, but they are from another culture, with a complete set of different customs, and they speak another language. If you pray for "wisdom", what would your immediate need be; what would you need "wisdom" for?

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Someone said: "*Wisdom, then, is the possession of the believer given by the Spirit that enables him to see history from the divine perspective*".<sup>1</sup>

READ JAMES 1:5 again. Where does one find the source of wisdom?

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"Ask" in the Bible is another word for *what*? (See LUKE 11:11-13, JAMES 4:2-3)

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What is the promise embedded in James 1:5?

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How does God answer the prayer of his child who lacks wisdom to live out his practical Christian life?

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John Calvin says the Lord is ready "*to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation*".

To be generous in giving is of the very essence of God. Men often accompany their gifts with disgruntled expressions which degrade and wound the recipient. But God gives and does not reproach. This is what the next part of the verse says. God gives without saying "*I told so!*" or "*You should have known better!*" "*Why ask Me when you are in trouble?*" God does not say "*Don't make your problem my problem.*" God gives to his child in need without strings attached. When He gives to his children He does not say "*I will do it, on the condition that you ...*"

READ LUKE 21:12-15. How does this promise affect the way you approach the throne of God when you ask for God's guidance when the going gets tough?

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How then, should we pray? READ JAMES 1:6

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What do the words "*believe and not doubt*" aim at: God and who God is, or those things being prayed for?

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<sup>1</sup> Davids, P. H. (1982). *The Epistle of James : A commentary on the Greek text* (72). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

READ HEBREWS 11:6. How does this verse spread light on James 1:6?

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The unbelieving, doubtful man is described in another term in JAMES 1:8. What is it?

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One commentator, in reference to James 1:6-7, writes: *“The emphasis falls on tossing; moving before the impulse of the wind, but not even moving in regular lines; tossed into rising and falling peaks. The doubter is completely out of control. He is on a wild ride to nowhere”*.<sup>2</sup> Bunyan called him *“Mr. Facing-both-ways.”*

If one is of “a double mind”, what sort of man is he? Does he think “*God exists/does no exist*” or does he think “*God can/can’t*” or “*God might be; so He might perhaps help*”?

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Do we get everything we ask for? If not, why not?

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The doubting pray-er is the person who wants to God to answer, but acts before God does. He, instead of following God, asks God to protect him from behind, while he himself leads the way.

One of the strong virtues of a child of God is to *wait* upon the Lord. God answers the prayer of his child in His own time and according to his own purposes – *all for his own glory*.

The Biblical *wait* means *“There will come a time when all that God has promised will be realized and fulfilled. In the meantime the believer survives by means of his integrity and uprightness as he trusts in God’s grace and power. His faith is strengthened through his testings, and his character is further developed.”*<sup>3</sup>

READ ISAIAH 49:23 and PSALM 27:14. What do these verses teach us about faith and faithful trust?

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What is the essence of “wait” for the Christian? READ ROMANS 5:1-5. What is the message of these verses?

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What bearing does ROMANS 8:31-39 have on the message of JAMES 1:5-8?

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<sup>2</sup> Hughes, R. K. (1991). *James : Faith that works*. Preaching the Word (30). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (791). Chicago: Moody Press.