

# NOTHING WAVERING

## JAMES 1:6-8

Text: James 1:6

### **James 1:6**

<sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

Introduction:

In American Sign Language, the sign for “please” is made by placing your right hand over the center of your chest, and moving it in a clockwise motion.

When I learned about that sign, it spoke to my heart and reminded me that when you say “please” to God, asking Him for something, it truly matters what it is in your heart.

The fifth verse of James chapter one ends with the phrase, “...let him ask, and it shall be given him.” That is a wonderful promise regarding the availability of divine wisdom to those who will simply ask God for it.

In verse 6, James adds a qualification to this invitation to ask God. He says, “*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering...*” The word “wavering” speaks of doubting.”

In this passage James teaches us that while we have an open invitation to ask God for the things that we need, if our request is sent in the envelope of doubt, it will not be answered.

When we doubt God and His Word, we cripple our prayers before they ever leave our mouths. Wavering prayer is worthless prayer, because it questions the very God to whom it is addressed.

You've heard the expression, "Give me the benefit of the doubt"? Someone once said, "Give me the benefit of your convictions, if you have any; but keep your doubts to yourself, for I have ugh of my own."

Many people have enough doubts of their own. However, because doubts can paralyze our ability to pray, they are seriously dangerous to the Christian life. It is for that reason that James gives us the warning in this passage before us.

Looking at verses 6-8, I want you notice with me some things James teaches us about doubts, and the danger they pose to our relationship with Christ.

Notice first of all, James teaches us here that:

# 1. DOUBTS ARISE FROM OUR INDECISION

## James 1:6

<sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

The word that is translated “wavering” in this verse is an interesting word.

The idea is of someone coming to God, without the ability to discern or decide. It is speaking of indecision.

The indecision that James describes in this verse is often the source of doubt in the life of a Christian, and it can lead to a sad and feeble Christian experience.

Notice a couple of things James teaches us about this indecision and the doubts that it creates.

First of all, notice:

### A. The Spiritual Problem of a Doubter

This word that is translated “wavering” in verse 6 paints the picture of someone who is hesitant and unable to make a clear decision. One writer explains it as the “hesitation” which goes back and forth between “faith and unbelief.”

The person who is “wavering” is having a battle of the mind. He is struggling within in himself about what he truly believes.

The spiritual problem of a doubter is that they cannot make the decision to fully believe what God has said in His Word.

They want to believe His promises, and at times they seem to do so. But then, when they look at their circumstances, and they crunch the numbers, and they consider the odds, then they begin to waver.

When we were in elementary school, they told us the story of how as a boy, the father of our country, George Washington, chopped down his father’s cherry tree. When confronted, young Washington supposedly said, “Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my little hatchet.”

In Titus 1:2 Paul states that God cannot lie. It is impossible for God to say something that is not true.

**Titus 1:2**

<sup>2</sup> In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

The spiritual problem of a doubter is that they are not completely sure that God has told them the truth. They would not dare call Him a liar, yet in their hearts they waver between believing Him and doubting Him.

Notice something else James tells us about these doubts that arise from indecision about the Word of God.

We see in verse 6, not only the spiritual problem of a doubter, but also:

### B. The Sad Picture of a Doubter

In verse 6, James states that this individual is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

James had seen his share of storms on the Sea of Galilee. He knew that the waters were whipped around and the waves were tossed in every direction when the wind of a storm hit the surface of the sea.

It is that picture that James uses to describe the life of a person who wavers in their trust of God. They are as shifty as the sea blown around in a storm.

The word “wave” in verse 6 is a word that does not speak of the normal tides, but rather of the waves created by the blowing of the wind.

The person who doubts God, and who is indecisive about trusting Him, is a person who never seems to have any calm in their life. Everything is always being tossed around, and peace is not enjoyed.

They cannot say, “It is well” when the “sorrows like sea billows roll.” That rolling is all they know, because they have never decided to fully trust God.

During the 2000 Masters Tournament, several people noticed a piece of paper pinned to the bag of golfer Vijay Singh. It turned out to be a note that helped Singh go on to win that tournament. The note was written by Vijay’s 10 year-old son, and it simply said, “Papa, trust your swing.”

The Bible is a note to all of God’s children. It says, “Child, trust your Father.” Those who waver and doubt have not yet decided to pin that note to their heart, and let it calm their life.

Notice a second truth James gives in this text.

## **2. DOUBTS ACCOUNT FOR OUR INEFFECTIVENESS**

James can never be accused of soft-peddling the truth. Notice what he says in verse 7:

### **James 1:7**

<sup>7</sup>For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

In this straightforward verse, James connects doubt to an inability to accomplish anything in prayer.

In other words James states that the man that doubts the Word of God for His life will not see the work of God in his life.

Notice a couple of things that we draw from this verse.

First of all:

#### A. This Is a Clear Word

We are tempted to believe that God will give us credit simply for asking Him, even when we are not sure that He can or will give us the thing we are requesting.

Note:

So very often, we pray with the mindset that “it doesn’t hurt to ask.” We pray, not really believing that God is going to answer, but hoping that maybe, to our surprise He will.

James tells us that doubt and faith are counter forces, and that if we pray with doubts in our hearts, we should not expect God to respond to our prayers.

While we can pray, “Lord, help thou mine unbelief”, we cannot pray, “Lord, overlook thou mine unbelief.”

The clear teaching of the Word of God is that a prayer infected with doubt will be ignored by God. He will not answer those half-hearted requests.

Illustration:

A few years ago, someone was irritated at me for not answering their phone calls. Of course, my phone keeps a record of every number that calls me, and I hadn't missed a single call from this person.

After we talked for a minute, I ask them what number they had called. Turns out they were dialing the wrong number all along. It is no wonder I never took their call.

To call on God with doubts in your heart is equivalent to dialing the wrong number. James clearly teaches us that we should not expect Him to answer a doubting prayer. His number begins with faith; not doubt.

Notice not only that verse 7 is a clear word, but notice also that:

B. This Is a Convicting Word

**James 1:7**

<sup>7</sup> For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Notice:



If we are praying with wavering hearts of doubt, James says that we will not receive anything from the Lord.

In light of that truth, if we are living a Christian life in which we are not seeing God answer our prayers, we must then ask ourselves whether or not we are wavering in our trust of God.

Now I know there are those today who teach that if you just have “enough” faith, you can get God to do what you want him to do.

However, the issue in this verse is not whether our faith is *sufficient*, but whether it is *steady*. Do we consistently and continually trust God, or are we wavering between faith and unbelief.

If you trust God today, but doubt Him tomorrow, James says that is the reason you are not seeing your prayers answered.

Though they would not admit it, many people feel like their prayer life is ineffective because something is wrong on God’s end. He is not listening, or He is not willing to answer their request.

In verse 7, we’re convicted with the truth that much of our ineffectiveness in prayer can be accounted for by the presence of doubts in our hearts.

There is a third truth that we see in our text with regard to doubts and their danger.

Notice not only that *doubts arise from our indecision*, and *doubts account for our ineffectiveness*, but notice also that:

### **3. DOUBTS ATTEST TO OUR INSTABILITY**

#### **James 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

Lest you think that doubts and wavering are only an issue when it comes time to pray, James tags verse 8 to this section and says, “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*”

The danger of doubts is greater than just an ineffective prayer life.

Doubts point to an underlying instability in all areas of our life.

The idea here is of someone who thinks or believes two different ways. It reminds us of the character from “Pilgrim’s Progress”, Mr. Facing-both-ways.

When we tittering between faith and unbelief, doubting the Word of God, we are like a doubled-

minded man, who knows and believes God, and yet does not.

This type of “double-minded” life is a terrible ride to be on. Each day is tug-of-war in the soul, and a torture to the Christian life.

Far too many Christians say that God is good one day and think that He is gone the next.

They are unstable, unsettled, unsure, and unhappy.

When your Christian life is like riding a roller-coaster rather than running a race, James says that the root of that instability is a double-mind of doubt.

Notice:

#### A. The Reach of this Instability

Notice that he does not say that a double minded man is just unstable in his prayer life. No, the doubt that derails his prayer life also destabilizes every other aspect of his life.

You may think that doubting God and struggling to believe His Word will only hinder your ability to pray. James says that a double minded man’s whole life is hindered by his condition.

Is there instability in your marriage?

Is there instability in your friendships?

Do you feel like your commitments in life are up and down, hot and cold?

The Word of God teaches us in this text that our unwillingness to simply believe God and His Word has the effect of unsettling every single aspect of our lives.

Illustration:

In 2004, when a tsunami struck the coast of Thailand, the source of that disaster was traced to an earthquake in the middle of the Indian Ocean. According to calculations, though the tsunami struck very quickly after the earthquake, the waves traveled some 2,800 miles.

Very often, people don't trace the upheaval and unrest in their lives to the proper source. The waves of instability in the different areas of your life are often coming from the doubts you have about God and His Word.

James says that when we ask God for things with indecisive doubts in our hearts that is directly connected to the instability that marks the rest of our life.

Close:

James teaches us that we have the great privilege to come to God and ask Him for the wisdom, or whatever else we need for our Christian life.

However, he also warns that when we ask, we must ask in faith, without a doubt in our mind as to the truth of God and His Word.

**Hebrews 11:6**

<sup>6</sup> But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Illustration:

I read about a little boy who went to the prayer meeting at his church, and asked the preacher to get the people to pray for his sister. His request was that God would make his sister start reading the Bible.

The preacher shared the request with the church, and as soon as they begin to pray for the boy's sister, he promptly got up and left the church.

This bothered the preacher, and so the next day he called the boy and asked him why he had left in the middle of the prayer meeting.

The little boy explained that he wasn't being rude. He said, "Sir, I wanted to go and see my sister read the Bible for the first time."

That little boy asked with "nothing wavering." He believed that God hears and answers the prayers of his people.

If we would have the things we ask for, we cannot let our faith be divided by doubt and unbelief.

Let us take God at His Word, believe He is Who He claims to be, and ask in faith for the things we need!

