

There are four men by the name of James mentioned in the New Testament. It was widely held by the early church that James, the author of this letter, is the half brother of Jesus.

The letter is believed to have been written around 46 A.D. to the 12 tribes of Israel that were scattered among the nations. After Stephen was martyred the persecution of the church increased in Jerusalem and throughout the Roman Empire. God used the persecution to move the church out into the world. The letter James wrote was circulated from church to church with instructions on how to lead a Christian life in such trying times.

James tells his readers to take joy in their trials of many kinds as the trials are a testing of faith and develop perseverance. He tells his readers that perseverance must finish its work so that they may mature and become complete. He sees perseverance as an opportunity for personal growth developing character. Sort of a biblical "no pain-no gain" weight training.

He tells us that if we lack wisdom (and we do) to ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given. God does not find fault with us when we ask for wisdom and does not think the lesser of us. In this sense he is not judgmental. As a father or mother we would/should be the same way with our children. We should be pleased our advice is sought. God feels the same way. This wisdom from God gives us the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. The wisdom from God is practical. It is a tool by which real life trials are overcome. The wisdom of God is divine. It shows a respect for God. The wisdom of God is Christlike. We act and live like a true brother or sister of Christ. A sort of "What Would Jesus Do" wisdom.

James tells his reader that when asking for wisdom he or she must believe and not doubt. Doubt, he says, is like a wave of the sea that is unsettled, blown and tossed about by the wind. You must be convinced that God's way is the best and confident that God will align your decisions with His purpose. I think that is what causes us the most difficulties as we think of what is best for us and do not give God's greater plan a thought. It's all about us. If you want to stop being tossed about, rely on God to show you what is best for you. With wisdom from God your decisions will be sure and solid.

James continues on by telling us to take pride in our humble circumstance. Be glad that riches mean nothing to God. True wealth comes by developing our spiritual life not by developing financial assets. The wealthy should also be glad money means nothing to God. Money is easily lost. It's what is in your heart, not your bank account, that matters to God and endures for eternity. The humble servant's roots are deep. Without deep spiritual roots the rich man will fade under the heat and wither. Trust in the Lord not your wealth and possessions which can easily be lost.

James is telling us that into each life a little rain must fall. It's all how we look at the rain. Life is not all sunshine and warm weather. There are storms we must weather and it is our faith in God that gets us through. The next time you are faced with a problem or adversity will you take the time to stop and ask God for wisdom and advice? Would your problems be easier to overcome if you had God by your side? What are you trying to get through right now that you could go to God for advice and guidance? Is your pride getting in the way?

