

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Problem With Doubt

(Jerry Fite)

James writes, “*But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given unto him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:5-8).

Many view doubt as an intellectual problem rooted in the lack of evidence. The word “agnostic” literally means “no knowledge”. The agnostic is not “anti-knowledge”, for most agnostics pride themselves in being educated. But, they have come to the conclusion that no knowledge exists to clearly prove something, one way or another.

James reminds us that doubt is not merely an intellectual matter, but is a spiritual matter. One is to ask for needed wisdom “in faith”, “nothing doubting”. Doubt engages the reasoning mind, but so does faith. Expressing doubt or uncertainty of unseen matters is just as much a spiritual matter as believing in the invisible

God, and His mysterious workings.

The problem with doubt is that it is a barrier spiritual progress. Here God is offering needed wisdom for your life, and you either doubt that God can meet your need, or if He can, will He? James increases our knowledge and answers these two questions. God can and is willing to “*give to all liberally*”. His giving is totally for your benefit, and not a selfish means to upstage you, for He does not “upbraid” or “reproach” you for asking.

Doubt sometimes is worn in honor on the chest of the non-committed. They are not against God’s way as an atheist, nor are they totally committed as the sincere believer. They are just riding the fence, first looking on this side and then the other, and then determining that there is no actual knowledge that proves the fence is dividing anything worthy of commitment. The fence just lifts them smugly above the fray.

Doubt sometimes allows lack of understanding in one area to drive one to doubt in all areas. James reminds us to not fall into that trap. We might lack the wisdom in understanding how being

persecuted for our faith produces patience or a steadfast faith as James claims (*James 1:3*). We need wisdom to properly apply this knowledge. James says go to God for the answer, “*ask God*”. Just because we lack knowledge in one area of God’s way, does not mean we reject God.

Job wrestled with God’s way of allowing him to be afflicted with so much physical pain and sorrow. The reason for Job’s suffering was not told him in the end, but rather his thinking was directed toward trusting in God (*Job 38*).

The problem with doubt is that it leads to spiritual instability. James says the doubter, is “*unstable in all his ways*.” His mind is not totally committed to God, but is distracted by the world. He is therefore “double minded”. He compares being focused upon God with how the world is living. The one trying to be righteous “*almost slipped*” when he viewed the prideful ungodly as not having trouble (*Psalms 73:2-14*). But as James directs, the doubter went to God in His sanctuary. He was reminded of the ungodly’s “*later end*” in judgment beyond this life (*Psalms 73:17-28*). Solve your issues of doubt with God!