

INTRODUCTION.

▶▶ Today, ~ we'll take up the remainder of [James 1:5-8](#), ~ specifically, ~ [verses 6b-8](#).

▷▷ As noted before, ~ in these verses, ~ James elaborates ~ on the doubter.

AT THE OUTSET, ~ SO THAT ~ WE DON'T MISINTERPRET ~ what James is saying, ~ ¶¶

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND TWO VITAL POINTS.

1<sup>st</sup>, ~ THE PHRASE, ~ "THE ONE WHO DOUBTS" ~ DOES NOT MEAN ~ ¶¶

▶▶ the one who is not ~ a true believer in Christ."

▷▷ As opposed ~ to one ~ who is a genuine Christian.

↪↪ 15x; ~ 3x beloved.

▶▶ "The one who doubts" means ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the one who wavers ~ and answers 'yes' and 'no' together, ~ with the practical emphasis ~ inevitably on the negative.

▶▶ Their doubts ~ are a constant contradiction of their faith.

▷▷ They cast a shadow ~ over their relationship with Jesus.

↪↪ Yet ~ they are ~ a believer. ¶¶ 1/10

## AND HERE'S THE 2<sup>nd</sup> VITAL POINT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ~ ~ 77

▶▶so that ~ we don't misinterpret ~ what James is saying

▶▶James ~ is not talking about ~ occasional doubting.

▷▷He is not demanding ~ that a believer ~ never ~ question or doubt.

▶▶Paul uses the same word ~ in his description of Abraham's faith.

▷▷Rom. 4:20-21. ⇔⇔ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

▷▷Yet ~ Paul was well aware ~ that Abraham did, ~ in fact, ~ doubt God's promise ~ on at least one occasion.

▷▷And i.e., ~ greeting God's promise about his son ~ with laughter (Gen. 17:15-18).

▷▷Paul's point ~ is not ~ that Abraham ~ never entertained any doubt about God's promise.

↳↳But that Abraham, ~ over many years, ~ displayed a consistency ~ in his faith in God.

→→Esp. seen ~ in willingness to sacrifice his son, ~ ~ Heb. 11:17-19 . . . .

▶▶James is not, ~ then, ~ here claiming ~ 77

▷▷that prayers ~ will never be answered ~ where any degree of doubt exists. 11 2/10

▶▶ In reality ~ some degree of doubt ~ on at least some occasions ~ is probably inevitable ~ in our present state of weakness.

▶▶ Rather, ~ James wants us to understand ~ that God responds to us only ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when our lives reflect ~ a basic ~ consistency ~ of trust in him.

↪↪ So the doubt ~ that James has in mind ~ is persistent/chronic doubt.

NOW LET'S UNPACK ~ VERSES 6b-8.

IN VERSE 6b, ~ JAMES PROVIDES ~ A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION ~ ON THE PERILS OF doubting.

LIKE THE OCEAN SURFACE, ~ THE PERSISTENT DOUBTER ~ IS BLOWN THIS WAY AND that ~ by the wind.

▶▶ I.e., ~ a picture of ~ instability, ~ uncertainty, ~ and constant change.

▶▶ Doubt becomes a moral problem here.

▷▷ For doubt becomes ~ willful disobedience to God.

▷▷ Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

↪↪ The right thing to do is ~ to continually and unswervingly believe ~ ¶¶

→→ that God exists ~ and ~ that he rewards those ~ who earnestly seek him.

THE CHRONICALLY DOUBTING BELIEVER ~ BECOMES LIKE ~ THE WICKED. ¶¶ 3/10

▶▶Is. 57:20, ~ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

▷▷By nature, ~ humans are, ~ at the least, ~ extremely vulnerable ~ to the evil influences all about them.

▷▷In unbelief ~ the unsaved ~ have ~ no direction ~ nor the strength ~ to withstand these influences.

▶▶But persistent doubt ~ renders the believer subject, ~ as noted before, ~ to these same evil forces.

▷▷Lacking confident trust in God, ~ how can the believer ~ make a request of God?

▷▷Persistent doubt ~ is contrary ~ to faith and trust in the Lord.

↪↪And it leaves the believer ~ entirely exposed ~ ¶¶

→→to its random assaults on the will.

IN VERSE 7, ~ JAMES GIVES THE CHRONIC DOUBTER ~ SOME BAD NEWS.

AND I.E., ~ THE CONSEQUENCE ~ OF PERSISTENT DOUBT.

▶▶Such people ~ should not expect to receive ~ anything from the Lord (NLT).

▶▶The believer who goes through the motions of prayer ~ but has no real confidence ~ ¶¶

▷▷that anything will happen ~ has deluded himself into thinking ~ an answer is even possible. ¶¶ 4/10

▷▷ On the contrary, ~ James says ~ he/she has no reason to think they will receive ~ anything from the Lord.

BEFORE MOVING ON, ~ LET'S SPEND A MOMENT LOOKING AT THE WORD "ANYTHING" here.

▶▶ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord

▶▶ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ the word broadens the scope ~ beyond wisdom ~ to encompass all of prayer.

▶▶ 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ "anything" ~ is limited ~ to the things for which ~ the persistent doubter has asked.

▷▷ It should not be pressed ~ beyond its context.

▷▷ They are not necessarily excluded ~ from those common benefits which the Lord, ~ 77

↳ ↳ the giver of all good, ~ bestows upon all people universally.

▷▷ As Jesus said, ~ God ~ causes his sun ~ to rise on the evil and the good, ~ 77

↳ ↳ and sends rain ~ on the righteous and the unrighteous (NIV).

▷▷ But as a chronic doubter, ~ they can expect to receive no specific answer ~ to their prayer.

IN VERSE 8, ~ JAMES CHARACTERIZES THE CHRONIC DOUBTER IN TWO WAYS.

NIV: Such a person is ~ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ double-minded ~ and 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ unstable in all they do.

1<sup>st</sup>, ~ THE CHRONIC DOUBTER IS ~ DOUBLE-MINDED. 77 5/10

▶▶ Double minded ~ refers ~ to oscillation between ~ certainty and uncertainty.

▶▶ The term appears ~ only in James, ~ here and in 4:8.

▷▷ Thought coined the expression.

↳↳ It is possible ~ James coined the term ~ to punctuate his depiction of doubt ~ ¶¶

→→ as an oscillation ~ between certainty and uncertainty.

▷▷ And no doubt ~ James' thinking ~ was rooted in the OT theme ~ ¶¶

↳↳ of unwavering and undivided commitment to God, ~ ¶¶

→→ which is reinforced by Jesus' teaching on loving God wholly.

↳↳ Deut. 6:5, ~ CSB ~ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (cf. Matt. 22:37).

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ the context indicates ~ that double-mindedness ~ is vacillating ~ ¶¶

▷▷ between certainty and uncertainty ~ regarding prayer.

▷▷ I.e., ~ whether God is able and willing to answer.

↳↳ And whether he ~ is really generous ~ and will answer without any ~ ¶¶

→→ negative, ~ critical, ~ or discouraging response. ¶¶ 6/10

▶▶ The word is literally ~ "two-souled."

▷▷ The expression ~ denotes ~ the doubter's divided attitude.

▷▷ They act as though ~ two distinct souls or personalities ~ are in their body, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in perpetual conflict with each other.

▷▷ The one believes God, ~ but the other disbelieves.

▷▷ The chronic doubter ~ is a walking civil war, ~ in which trust and distrust of God ~ ¶¶

↳↳ wage a continual battle against each other.

▷▷ It is as though one soul declares, ~ "I believe," ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and the other in turn shouts, ~ "I don't!"

▷▷ The persistently doubting believer ~ is like ~ Mr. Facing-Both-Ways ~ ¶¶

↳↳ from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

→→ He could see the merits ~ of every opinion or option.

↪↪ But he failed to make a decision ~ about which one was superior.

AS NOTED, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ in verse 8, ~ James characterizes the chronic doubter ~ in two ways. ¶¶ 7/10

2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ JAMES CHARACTERIZES THE CHRONIC DOUBTER AS ~ UNSTABLE ~ in all they do.

▶▶ The person ~ who in prayer ~ lacks certainty with regard to God ~ is also ~ 77

▷▷ in his conduct ~ lacking in ~ inner stability.

▷▷ I.e., ~ not merely in regard to prayer, ~ the point particularly under discussion, ~ but in respect ~ to everything.

▶▶ "All" here ~ means ~ "all" ~ without exception.

▷▷ Every area ~ of the chronically doubting believer's life ~ is affected.

▶▶ They are uncertain ~ in making decisions ~ and in what they do.

▷▷ They cannot act ~ decisively or reliably.

▷▷ And they are indecisive ~ in business and social life.

▶▶ No solid trust ~ in God and his abilities ~ leaves the constantly doubting believer ~ 77

▷▷ vulnerable ~ to the various circumstances of life.

↪↪ Troubles and crises ~ in their personal life and in the world ~ will make them ~ anxious and fearful.

▶▶ Lack of confidence in God ~ will lead ~ 77

▷▷ to seeking confidence in people and/or things. 77 8/10



▶▶ Instability ~ in one's relationship with God ~ can lead to idolatry, ~ 77

▷▷ as the doubting believer ~ pours their hopes & fears ~ into someone or something else.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ the unstable believer ~ is susceptible to false teaching.

▷▷ In Ephesians Paul says that ~ when believers are spiritually mature, ~ 77

↪↪ we won't be tossed and blown about ~ by every wind of new teaching.

→→ We will not be influenced ~ when people try to trick us with lies so clever ~ they sound like the truth.

▶▶ And, ~ the mind of an unstable believer ~ is fertile ground for Satan to come in ~ 77

▷▷ and plant more seeds of doubt ~ and lead the believer astray.

### HOW TO OVERCOME ~ INSTABILITY AND DOUBT, ~ BOTH CHRONIC AND OCCASIONAL.

#### INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY ~ MAY BE REMEDIED BY THE FOLLOWING.

▶▶ By gaining assurance ~ from God's word. (Ps. 119:147)

▷▷ I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words.

▶▶ We can overcome doubt by ~ receiving understanding through God's word. (Ps. 119:130)

▷▷ The unfolding of your words gives light; ~ ~ 77

↪↪ it imparts understanding to the simple. 77 9/10

▶▶ We can overcome doubt by ~ remembering God's past goodness. (Ps. 143:5)

▷▷ I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

▶▶ We can overcome doubt by remembering ~ God's compassion for the weak. (Ezek. 34:16a)

▷▷ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.

▶▶ We can overcome doubt ~ by appealing ~ to God's unfailing love.

▷▷ For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you (Is. 54:10).

▶▶ We can overcome doubt by ~ trusting in God's strength.

▷▷ Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Is. 41:10).

▶▶ And, ~ we can overcome doubt by ~ reflecting on God's power.

▷▷ In Ephesians, ~ Paul: ~ believers would come to know ~ God's incomparably great power ~ for us who believe. ⇔⇔ All powerful . . . .

### AND JUST A CLOSING NOTE.

STRONG BELIEVERS ~ SHOULD HELP WEAKER BELIEVERS ~ ¶¶

▶▶ with the patience and encouragement ~ that reflects ~ God's own compassion. 10/10