

Faith and Doubt

S.R. James 1:5 - 8

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Introduction:

- A. What is James telling us: (James 1:5 – 8)
- B. At first glance, this passage can feel intimidating. It almost seems to say that if we doubt at all, God will withhold His help. That can be discouraging, especially for anyone already wrestling with uncertainty.
- C. So, when James says, “that person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord,” he is not condemning struggling believers.
- D. Key takeaway: Struggle and doubt are normal, but the answer is always the same — reach toward Jesus, don’t turn away. (John 7:5)

I. Faith that is Not Perfect – It can Grow

- A. Faith is not a finished product. It’s a journey, meant to grow and deepen. (Col.2)
- B. Even the most mature Christians wrestle with fear, uncertainty, and weakness. That doesn’t mean our faith has failed. It means there is room to grow — and the way to grow is to keep reaching toward Jesus, even when our hearts are trembling.

II. Jesus Responds to Faith that Struggles

- A. We often imagine what Jesus might say when someone comes to Him in doubt. But Scripture shows us His responses are always loving, encouraging, and empowering.
- B. **Peter – Faith that Falters (Matthew 14:22 – 33)**
- C. **The Desperate Father (Mark 9:24)**
- D. **John the Baptist – Faith Under Pressure (Matthew 11:2 – 6)**
- E. **Centurion – Faith that Amazed Jesus (Matthew 8:5 – 13)**
- F. Take Away: Every example points to the same truth: when we face doubt, fear, or trouble, the answer is to **reach toward Jesus**. He meets us there, strengthens us, and helps us grow in faith.

III. Revisiting James - Understand the Warning

- A. Returning to James, the NLT may shed further light:

“But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.” — James 1:6 (NLT)

- B. It is understood that the NLT is more of a paraphrase than a strict translation, but it may help us understand James's point: he's warning against a divided heart, not struggling believers.
- C. Honest doubt that leads us to Jesus is never rejected. It's the first step toward growing stronger faith.
- D. Rejecting Christ has eternal consequences (Heb. 10:26 – 31)

IV. Faith as a Growing Seed – Learning to Ride a Bike

- A. Faith is like a seed in the soil. Storms bend it, drought makes it tremble, yet when nurtured, it grows strong.
- B. Or imagine a child learning to ride a bike. They wobble, they fall, fear creeps in, yet with encouragement and guidance, they eventually ride confidently.
- C. Our faith works the same way. Even when small or shaky, reaching toward Jesus strengthens it. Over time, it grows stronger.

V. Conclusion: Reach Toward Jesus

- A. If your faith feels weak or shaky, remember this: Jesus never turns away anyone who reaches toward Him.
- B. Whether your faith is like **Peter sinking**, the father crying out, John in prison, or somewhere in between — He meets you there.
- C. And **remember the centurion** — strong faith is possible. Through Jesus, we can grow step by step toward that kind of trust.
- D. You don't need perfect faith to come to Him. You just need enough faith to say: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Confession – Romans 10:9 - 10
- E. Jesus will meet you in your doubt, strengthen your faith, and one day bring it to perfection. Hebrews 12:2 (Hebrews 12:2, NIV) reminds us: **"Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith."**

What matters is enough faith to reach out to Jesus, to take the **first step of obedience in baptism, having your sins washed away, choosing God over the world and everything in it.**

- F. Faith begins when you turn toward Jesus, even with questions or uncertainty.
 1. He will meet you, strengthen you, and walk with you as you grow.
 2. You can become a Christian today — right now — by reaching toward Him, trusting Him to guide you, and saying yes to His invitation, even if you still have some doubt, if your faith isn't perfect.