

James 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. Faith (*pistis*, πίστις) is the channel for wisdom; James demands asking without "wavering" (*diakrinomenos*, διακρινόμενος), a participle describing divided judgment. The image of a wave (*kludōn*, κλύδων) driven and tossed depicts spiritual instability—the opposite of steadfast patience. Prayer that hesitates between trusting God's character and clinging to self-reliance undermines itself.

The Reformed emphasis on God's sovereignty safeguards us from superstition: faith does not manipulate God but receives what He freely gives in Christ. Yet James insists that unbelief is no minor lapse; it reveals a heart trying to keep one foot in worldly calculation and another in covenant trust. True wisdom flows only when believers plant both feet firmly on the promises secured by Jesus.

Historical Context

Diaspora believers were surrounded by competing philosophies—Stoic resignation, Cynic cynicism, and pagan divination. James, writing from Jerusalem soon after the Jerusalem Council debates, steers them toward wholehearted dependence rather than syncretistic bargaining. His language parallels Paul in Romans 4, where Abraham does not "waver" but grows strong in faith.

These persecuted saints needed assurance that asking God in faith was not futile even when circumstances seemed bleak. James reinforces that in the new covenant era, wisdom is mediated through Christ's lordship, not temple rituals or magic formulae.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Where do you sense a tug-of-war between trusting God and hedging bets with worldly security?
2. How can specific promises of Scripture steady your prayers this week?
3. What action would demonstrate that you believe God will supply the wisdom you asked for?

Interlinear Text

αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος ὁ γὰρ
let him ask **But** **in** **faith** **nothing** **he that wavereth** **G3588** **For**
G154 G1161 G1722 G4102 G3367 G1252 G1063

διακρινόμενος ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένω
he that wavereth **is like** **a wave** **of the sea** **driven with the wind**
G1252 G1503 G2830 G2281 G416

καὶ ῥιπιζομένω
and **tossed**
G2532 G4494

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:6 (Faith): 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.

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Hebrews 10:23 (Faith): Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

Hebrews 13:9 (Parallel theme): Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

1 Timothy 2:8 (Parallel theme): I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

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