



# SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

## STRENGTHENING OUR WAVERING FAITH

KEY PASSAGE: James 1:2-8 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Job 13:15 | Matthew 7:7; 21:22 | Luke 5:1-11; 6:38  
Philippians 4:19

### ► SUMMARY

#### Faith is essential to the Christian life.

It's how we begin walking with God and the only way we can experience the full measure of spiritual blessings. But in hard times, we often begin to question the wisdom of continuing to believe the Lord will provide. We may wonder what good it does to continue following Him. But if we refuse to waver in faith, we will eventually experience the fullness of God's will for us.

### ► SERMON POINTS

James says that faith is essential to experiencing God's best for our lives. He tells us that trials can be opportunities to grow in endurance and ultimately, maturity. If we lack wisdom to handle life's struggles, we can ask God, who will give it generously. However, James has a strong warning against wavering in faith: "For the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (see 1:2-8).

#### Why should we rejoice when we go through trials?

James doesn't suggest Christians should be joyful because of the trial itself. Instead, we can be grateful that God uses difficulty and hardship to purify us and strengthen our faith. Adversity helps us grow in endurance. We learn to walk in faith despite what our eyes tell us and no matter how hard life gets.

Will we ever be flawless? No. James mentions becoming "perfect and complete," but in context, this refers to a continuous maturing process (v. 4). The Father works in our lives until we are perfectly fitted to be the people He called us to be for His ordained purposes. As long as we ask in faith, not doubting, God will generously give us wisdom to handle the valleys of our lives.

#### What is wavering faith?

This refers to constantly changing our minds about whether God will be faithful. Those who doubt, says James, are like ocean waves. They go back and forth between trusting and doubting, just as the waves in the ocean ebb and flow.

Most people occasionally have wavering faith. Sometimes we are blindsided by circumstances. Even in times of peace, one day we confidently ask God for help with a specific need, yet another day, we struggle to trust Him.

#### What causes our faith to waver?

- **Being uncertain about the will of God.** He is committed to revealing clear direction as we ask confidently for wisdom. Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). Once we know His will, we can pray with complete faith.
- **Human reasoning that conflicts with faith.** The Christian life won't always look reasonable, and our emotions and negative thoughts can easily lead to doubts. One morning, Peter believed catching fish was impossible, but Jesus gave him a huge haul (Luke 5:1-11). Tithing may not always seem possible, but God

stretches the other 90 percent of our income in ways that sometimes surprise us. Luke 6:38 says, “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”

■ **Failing to see God at work in our circumstances.**

Often, the Lord works more slowly than we expect. He wants us to trust Him, step by step, without necessarily knowing the outcome. If we respond by faith, good things will come in time.

■ **Listening to the negative counsel of others.** God has a unique plan for your life, so be careful whom you turn to for wisdom. You might be discouraged when you share with the wrong people your God-ordained dreams or the path He is guiding you on.

■ **Focusing on the circumstance.** The more you dwell on your problem, the larger it will seem. For strong faith, focus on the Father instead of the issue. Believe what He tells you about your future, rather than your own observations and predictions.

■ **Being ignorant of God’s ways.** We must know the nature of the Lord to trust Him in difficulty. He is ready to reward those who put their trust in Him. Our sovereign Father can change a situation at any moment. He refines us through suffering.

■ **Living in disobedience to God.** When we are willfully sinning, our confidence before God is overshadowed by a sense of shame. This hinders our faith. Even false guilt—for example, doubting that we are still saved because we sinned—will interfere and can lead to doubt.

## What are the consequences of wavering faith?

■ **Missing the blessings of God.** James says that people who doubt won’t receive anything from the Lord. God is completely faithful; He’s not ignoring your life. He knows what is best for us as His children; therefore, we can’t lose. Seek to discover God’s will and pray accordingly for your life and future.

■ **Being blown off course by small things.** Instead, look for the signs that He’s working. Anticipate that the Father will answer your prayer in His timing and in His way (Matt. 21:22). Keep trusting.

■ **Being miserable instead of peaceful.** People may begin by trusting God, but when life disappoints them, they give up. The truth is, the Father has something better for us when our prayers aren’t answered as we hoped.

## How can we correct wavering faith?

It comes down to a decision: Resolve to trust God always. Don’t give in to the temptation to become bitter, angry, and unfaithful because of life’s circumstances. Even in the middle of adversity, Job was determined to be true to God; he said, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him” (13:15). We need that type of determination.

Spending time reading the Bible and meditating on its promises has the power to change our thinking. We become less vulnerable to attacks of doubt because our minds are filled with scriptural truth. In times of struggle, we can declare that our trust is in the living God, who is fully aware of every need (Phil. 4:19). Looking for the ways the Father is providing can make life an adventure even in times of struggle.

### ► RESPONSE

- Have you ever found yourself bitter when your prayers appeared to go unanswered? On the other hand, have you been able to trust Him again after a big loss?
- Think back to a time of adversity in your life. How did the Lord use it to refine your character, grow your trust in Him, or prepare you for His will in your life?
- How is God currently using a difficulty to purify your heart? How are you maturing through the situation?

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