

James 1:8 being a double-minded man,
unstable in all his ways. (NASB)

1. Verse 8 concludes the second paragraph of chapter 1. It started in verse 5 and we have developed a dossier of a believer whose soul is out of control.
2. This loss of control is indicated in verse 5 as being “deficient of wisdom.” If this condition is true, then imperative mood #3 commands the believer that “he must keep on asking God for the acquisition of wisdom through prayer,” illustrated by the visual, “Instantaneous Extradimensional Communications Network.”
3. This takes positive volition, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and humility in approaching the throne of grace. Yet, believers are commanded to keep on asking in this fashion.
4. Even so, verse 6 introduces a caveat. The believer is directed in imperative mood #4 that “he must keep on praying for wisdom, doubting nothing.”
5. If full confidence and trust do not undergird the prayer, then this believer will not be supplied with wisdom but instead will be “like the atmospheric and oceanic forces of the sea.”
6. This instability of soul is characterized as waves “constantly being agitated by various wind forces hurling him about to and fro.”
7. Verse 7 presents a conclusion to this whole matter by introducing imperative mood #5, “Such a man must stop the ongoing process of presuming he will receive anything in the future from the Lord.”
8. Verse 8 concludes the paragraph with a synopsis of how and why this individual reached such a sad denouement. “Denouement” is an excellent word to explain the problem exposed in this second paragraph.
9. The word has its etymology from the Latin formation, *dis* plus *nōdare* referring to a *difficulty, entanglement, perplexity*. Literally, “to untie a knot.”
10. The French incorporated it into its lexicon with the base meaning of *to untie*. Its inclusion into English dictionaries and its several definitions express the application to many of the entanglements we observe in politics, drama, literature, and especially in Scripture. Here are a few:

Denouement \dā-nü-mäⁿ\: The final outcome of the main dramatic complication in a literary work. The outcome of a complex sequence of events.³

Denouement: The final part of a play, movie, or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved. The climax of a chain of events, usually when something is decided or made clear.⁴

Denouement: The solution, clarification, or unraveling of the plot of a play or novel. Any outcome or final solution.⁵

Denouement: Unravelling; specifically the final unravelling of the complications of a plot in a drama, novel, etc.; the final solution or issue of a complication, difficulty, or mystery.⁶

Denouement: The outcome, solution, unraveling, or clarification of a plot in a drama, story, etc. The point in the plot where this occurs. Any final revelation or outcome.⁷

Denouement: The clearing up or 'untying' of the complications of the plot in a play or story; usually a final scene or chapter in which mysteries, confusions, and doubtful destinies are clarified.⁸

11. The key word in verse 8 that nails the problem previously described is the noun **δίψυχος (dipsuchos)**: “double-minded.” The two uses of this word by James are true hapax legomena.
12. The singular form is “hapax legomenon,” meaning that it is used only once. Here it is used twice by James in his epistle, but nowhere else in the Bible or in the Septuagint. It is used in the writings of the church Fathers.

Double-minded (δίψυχος). Literally the word meant “double-souled.” The noun has not been found in the LXX or in secular writing. Neither is the verb found in the LXX or the New Testament, but it does occur in the writings of the Fathers.

There it meant to be undecided or changeable, especially referring to the indecision of accepting Christianity or belief in specific Christian doctrine or teaching. It is probable that the use of this term by the Fathers developed from the Book of James where *dipsuchos* is twice employed (James 1:8; 4:8).⁹

³ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “denouement.”

⁴ The New Oxford American Dictionary (2001), s.v. “denouement.”

⁵ Morris, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1971), s.v. “denouement.”

⁶ The Oxford English Dictionary (1971), “denouement.”

⁷ Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, 2d ed. (1962), s.v. “denouement.”

⁸ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1990), s.v. “denouement.”

⁹ H. L. Drumwright, Jr., “Double-Minded,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 2:160.

13. The probability that the early church Fathers likely took the term used by James and employed it in their commentaries has led to the conclusion by some that James actually coined the word:

James 1:8 is the first appearance of this word in Greek literature, as far as scholars can observe, of δίψυχος, used in the New Testament only here and in 4:8. The basic idea of a divided person is known as early as Plato's "twofold man" (διπλούς ανήρ) in *Republic*. In Jewish literature, we find the phrase ἐν καρδία δισση ("with a double heart") in Sir 1:28 [*Ecclesiasticus*], and the use of διπρόσωπος ("double-faced") in *T. Ash. 2:5* [Testament of Asher]. In a thorough study that addresses the question about this being a "Christian word," S. E. Porter concludes that James did indeed coin this substantive and that it is best translated as "double-souled." Porter's suggested translation not only emphasizes the root meaning of the word but also conveys the uniqueness of δίψυχος compared to the other "double" words that appear in Greek literature prior to James.¹⁰

14. The word *dípsuchos* is a compound adjective whose prefix is *dí*: "two" or "double" and the root *psuchiós*: "soul." The literal translation is "double souled." This dichotomy is present in the soul of many believers.
15. The soul's καρδία function's as the right man of a believer's mentality and function. In competition with the *kardía* is emotion which seeks to trump the soul's authority. In this negative application, emotion functions as the right woman of the *kardía* by means of an emotional revolt.
16. The concept of "double souled" is a way of explaining the battle between the flesh and the soul. The flesh attacks by deploying its agent provocateurs with the mission of compromising recall of truth and emotion often leads the assault.
17. Once inside the soul, through the permission of free will, emotion overrules the mentality and blackout of the soul results.
18. The word for man in verse 8 is the noun **άνήρ** (*anēr*) which is in apposition with **άνθρωπος** (*ánthrōpos*), also translated "man" in verse 7.

¹⁰ William Varner, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary: James*, gen. ed. H. Wayne House (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2014), 123.

19. In verse 7, the singular noun *ánthrōpos* is really generic in its reference to mankind—man and woman. In that context, it is associated with the present active imperative of the verb **οἴομαι** (*oíomai*): “to presume.”
20. In verse 8, the word for man is not *ánthrōpos* but *anḗr* which refers to “a man of weight, importance. Joined with an adjective [double souled] it forms a periphrasis to describe the type of man under discussion.”¹¹
21. The man in context is not thinking the way “a man of importance” ought to think, thus what is formed here is an oxymoron: “A figure of speech that combines two usually contradictory terms in a compressed paradox, as in the word *bittersweet*.”¹²
22. This use of *anḗr* indicates that the person in context is a believer and as such he is a member of the royal family of God with knowledge of biblical truths in his stream of consciousness.
23. Due to reversionism he has digressed into several obvious stages of emotional revolt, negative volition toward doctrine, blackout of the soul, and scar tissue of the soul.
24. Although in the throes of emotional revolt, this man remains positionally an *anḗr*. The oxymoron describes a man of distinction positionally but who is behaving as an unbeliever experientially.
25. In former status-quo spirituality, he was inside the bubble; in present status-quo carnality he is outside the bubble. A man of distinction by means of volitional choices now takes on the character of an unbeliever.
26. He is described as a **δίψυχος ἀνήρ** (*dípsuchos anḗr*), “a double souled man.” Although formally a stable believer, in this context James indicates he “is unstable in all his ways.”
27. The word “unstable” is another hapax legomenon, the compound adjective **ἀκατάστατος** (*akátástatos*): “unstable, restless, vacillating, fickle, unsettled, or unsteady.”

¹¹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 172.

¹² Baldick, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. “oxymoron.”

28. *Akatástatos* begins with the privative alpha which indicates the absence of the following quality. The alpha here is a prefix of the derivative verb **καθίστημι** (*kathístēmi*): “to stand, be set, constitute, to take a position.”
29. The alpha inverts the meaning when used as a prefix where it describes a person who does not possess these qualities.
30. James describes the individual as one who is unable to take a stand. In the context of a prayer, he lifts his petition to God, but he does so without confidence that God will answer it.
31. Paragraph 2 begins at verse 5 with the phrase, “If any of you is deficient of wisdom, then he must keep on asking from the immediate source from God.”
32. James continues his lecture on the importance and mind-set of prayer in verse 6, “But he must keep on praying for wisdom by means of faith, doubting nothing.”
33. When such a believer prays while doubting, it causes him to become like water “whose waves are constantly being agitated by various wind forces hurling him about to and fro.”
34. In verse 7, James in imperative mood #5, commands this believer to “stop the ongoing process of presuming he will receive anything from God.”
35. This thought continues into verse 8 where we discover the subject of the second paragraph is double souled, in emotional revolt, and completely ineffectual in the Invisible War.
36. This person is a royal aristocrat since he is classified as “a man” (an “*anér*”), therefore commissioned as a warrior for Christ. Nevertheless, his failure to grow in grace has reduced him to the status of a defector.¹³
37. This second paragraph exposes the dangers that are confronted by the believer as he moves through life in the midst of an Invisible War. Ignorance of this conflict creates an assumed environment of peace and tranquility, especially when living in a client nation.
38. The emphasis in the paragraph has been on the mechanics of prayer, the mental attitude one must adopt to present a prayer, and the mental attitudes that must be avoided in order to pray with confidence.

¹³ “Defector: to forsake one cause for another often because of a change in ideology. To leave one situation often to go over to a rival” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. s.v. “defect.”