

James 5:7-11 Patient Suffering

In 1:2: James says, “**Count it all joy when you meet various kinds of trials . . .**” Why? Because through suffering and trials God produces in us perseverance, which is a part of our sanctification (v. 3). In 1:12 he says that even during our trials, we are “*blessed*,” NOW, as we await a future blessing, “**the crown of life**” which He has promised to his children. James 5:7-11 says very much the same thing. But it comes at the end of the letter as a final reminder and application to his readers who find themselves under great trials as persecuted Christians. His command in v. 7 is “***Be Patient***.” Though our trials may not be the same, nevertheless, we have them. In the same kind of way, we need this passage to help us this week and the next, etc. until the Lord Jesus comes back.

James says: “***Be Patient***.” Who would like to have more patience? It is important to James. And it must be important to us. In this text, we see the word 4 times (v. 7 x 2, v. 8, v. 9). If you remember from cp. 1, we’ve already seen the word “steadfast” many times. And in 5:11 we see “steadfast” two more times. And they are close in meaning. They go together. Steadfast means to faithfully “bear” or “carry” a load of something (like carrying a heavy backpack up a hill for a long time). To be patient is a little different. With patience, the emphasis is not on carrying the burden itself, but our attitude as we carry the burden. Carry your backpack with a good attitude. Some people can appear very patient, but they are not.

The context of James is the rich (non-Christian) who is persecuting the “righteous person.” They are withholding wages, committing fraud, and even murdering. Look at 5:4: “**Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you . . .**” And v. 6: “**You have condemned and murdered the righteous person.**” With this in mind, James tells them AND US to be patient. I have 3 truths and 2 applications.

1. Be patient in suffering as you remember that judgment is coming. Look at v. 1 “**Be patient, therefore brothers, until the coming of the Lord.**” And v. 8: “**You also, be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**” Now, this judgment will coincide with the coming of Christ. And this truth is always on the mind and the heart of the Christian. It is the next great event in history. Jesus says to us: “I am going to prepare a place for you and, “***I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also***” (John 14:3). Tit. 2:13 says, we wait “**for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ . . .**” Kids, how do you endure and be patient such long car trips to the beach or other far-away places? It is because of what is waiting for you, what you know will be such a good time of fun and rest and time with your family in cool places. Therefore, James speaks of Jesus’ coming. But, his point is not merely his coming; the emphasis is on what He is coming to do.

James is saying, “*Be patient in suffering as you remember the sure coming judgment of God,*” which will happen at the coming of Christ. And this is really the emphasis of James. His readers are suffering at the hands of the ungodly. And things are pretty bad. He is saying, “**Be patient, for you know that God will bring forth sure justice one day.**” Look at the 2nd part of v. 9: “**behold, the Judge is standing at the door . . .**” and this is in the context of the “**coming of the Lord**” (v. 8). James uses the example of a farmer who waits on his harvest, knowing God will

send rain. Look at the 2nd part of v. 7: “**See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth**” (what we wait for is precious), “**being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.**” Farmers can be very anxious as they wait in patience for the rains and the growing and the harvesting of their crops, especially if their livelihood depends on the crops. I’m not really a farmer. I can go down to food lion and buy green beans and corn. But the farmer in Palestine during the time of James could not. But, year after year they knew that God had sent early and late rains (OT illustration of God’s blessing), and eventually the crop would come. This reality helped them with patience.

Whatever you are going through, be patient! Justice is coming one day. Physical healing is coming one day. Mental healing is coming one day. The chaos and sin in this world will cease to be at the coming of the Lord. Matt. 25:31-34: “**When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’**” Let this truth be a precious promise to the working of patience in your life!

Application: God may not deliver you from your suffering until the coming of the Lord. James’ example of the OT prophets fits this truth. As far as I know, every single one of them endured great suffering and trials as they boldly spoke God’s Word. And most were killed. I am not sure what “prosperity” preaching does with this one. And we see throughout the Bible that God’s grace is sufficient NOW! Paul prayed for healing three times and God did not do it, but instead says, “**My grace is sufficient in weakness, for my power is made perfect in weakness . . .**” (2 Cor. 12:9). Brothers and sisters, today is the day for weakness. Today is the day for humility. Today is the day of suffering. But we await a great reversal when the weak will be strong and the proud and exalted will be brought low! Therefore, NOW, be patient! “**Vengeance is mine**” says the Lord! (Deut. 32:35).

Before moving to the next truth, I want to simply mention by way of truth and application that it is normal and understood that the return of the Lord Jesus is imminent. Look at v. 8: “**for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**” And v. 9: “**the Judge is standing at the door.**” I do not take the view simply that the early church missed this truth because here we are two thousand years later still waiting our Lord’s return ((Jesus, Peter, Paul, Peter, and James all refer to a “near” return). And I will not go into much explanation here in this sermon. But I do believe that since the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, we are now in the “last days.” But, we do not know the length of these days. This means that the application is that every generation of Christians live with the mindset that Jesus could come back at any time. This is a great motivation for godly living and the spread of the gospel in this world. The coming of Jesus is described as a “thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). The power for patience is so connected in the conviction that the time of judgment is imminent!

2. Be patient in suffering as you consider the purpose of God to do good to his people. I get this truth from v. 11: “**Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord . . .**” This word

“purpose” is literally “end.” The KJV translates it as “*you have seen the end of the Lord.*” However, the context is clear and I don’t think “end” captures the meaning. The NAS translates it as “*you have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings.*” And the ESV says “**purpose.**” I think James is saying, “*consider all your suffering, all your trials, knowing that they are all working in such a way that God will bring about his purpose in you, which is ultimately to do you good.*”

For his example James uses Job. Job endured suffering with patience. But think back to the beginning of his suffering. First, it began with Satan having a conversation with God about “God’s servant,” Job. Satan says to God, “*You are protecting him too much. Just let me at him, let me take away the things that matter to him and will see how faithful he remains.*” So, God give Satan permission. And in one day he loses all his flocks, herds, houses, and even his children. And what does he do? He says, “**Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD**” (Job 1:21). Then, God gives permission a second time for Satan to take his health away from him. And his skin is filled with some kind of boil (“loathsome sores”). And then, he loses the support of his wife who says, “Curse God and die.” And in the face of all this he says, “*You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*” ***In all this Job did not sin with his lips***” (Job 2:10).

Now, as we read through the Book of Job, we see that he did complain sometimes and that he struggled greatly with his afflictions. And he wasn’t happy about it. And he wasn’t always the most patient. But, James emphasis is on the purpose of God in Job’s life, AND in the life of all God’s people. All of us will go through trials and we will suffer. But, in the end we will say, “*Blessed be the name of the Lord.*” Now, Job, even with his losses, was given back more in his life more than he had at first. But, the giving of things was not God’s ultimate purpose. Ultimately, it was this: As Job endured with patient suffering, and blessed the name of God throughout, God, not Job, was given the glory. Why? Because without the grace of God in his life, he would have surely taken the advice of his wife. Job did not look to the things of this world, but to the promise of God to do him good ONE day. He says, “**For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God**” (Job 19:25-26).

In the same way, God promises to do good to us, and the purpose of this is his glory. This is why James commands us to “*endure with patience.*” And, “*Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds*” (1:2), and “**Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life . . .**” (1:12). Afflictions, trials, sufferings, must be understood with the end purpose of God in view. Does this truth sound familiar to you? Are there any verses that come to mind? What about Rom. 8:18? Paul says, “**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**” And then in vv. 28-30: “**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**”

3. Be patient in suffering as you consider the character of God. This truth follows close our previous one. Look at v. 11: **“Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord . . . *how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*”** This truth comes directly from many passages in the OT that speak about the mercy and compassion of God to Israel despite their rebellion. Psalm 103:8 says, **“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”** And then v. 10: **“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”** Over and over again Israel rebels and goes their own way! And often they are judged and a great number of them killed in wars, and eventually carried off into captivity. Yet, God does not let them completely come to an end, but instead preserves a remnant.

And when I look at my life, what do I see? I see the great compassion and mercy of God who **“*showed his love toward me, in while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me*”** (Rom. 5:8). Where is the character of God displayed the greatest? It is the cross of Christ! Christ was judged in our place! **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”** (Eph. 2:4-7).

Brothers and sisters, God’s purpose it to do good to you . . . for his mercy and compassion is great in Christ. And the way we remember is to look unto Christ! As we go through trials and suffering, we can be patient for we know that the mercy and compassion of God will lead us to a glorious end.

Let me end with 2 applications from the text.

Be patient in suffering as you establish your hearts. Really, this means to know these truths about the character and purpose of God and in light of these things be resolved to endure with patience ALL of life’s trials. Count your blessings and be godly. Be spiritually firm, not wavering in the face of the trials. Stand firm in the faith and do not give in to doubt. And when this happens, patience flows from within. It comes from a heart that is 100% devoted to the will of God, 100% devoted to being godly, 100% trusting the character of God and his promises. This means that no matter the cost, we obey . . . to do what God tells us to do, to go where God tell us to go, to live as God tells us to live, etc. Establish your heart!

Be patient in suffering as you do not grumble against one another. The opposite of patience is grumbling and complaining, especially through the trials in this life. This is a very practical test to see if you are patient or not. Patience finds its application in the heart. And it makes its way to the mouth and to our actions. Example: What if you are going through a trial like the care of aging parents or a rebellious child or a non-Christian spouse, or some kind of religious persecution, and you seem to be doing all-right to those around you, but in your heart all you do is grumble and complain. You are enduring. On the outside you are “patient,” you keep your mouth shut, but in your heart, you blame God, you blame others, and the state of your heart is causing other issues such as anxiety and depression, etc. There is so much I could say here, but it

is interesting that patience is related to so many other issues, especially anger. Anger and lack of patience go hand in hand.

Well, we all want to be more patient in this life. Well, today's text must help us. Brothers and sisters, "Be patient." Remember these truths. Judgment is coming at the return of the Lord Jesus. There will be a great reversal where the humble will be exalted and the proud brought low. Remember, Jesus' return is always imminent. Also, through your trials, know that God is working them for your good. And, look unto Christ as you remember the character of God, especially his mercy and compassion, both to save you and keep you until the end.