

James 5:7-12

BE PATIENT - VS. 7A

Even though there is persecution now, in this life, be patient for the coming of the Lord. Isn't that what all believers should be looking for? Many of these believers may have been the ones suffering at the hands of the unjust wealth seekers. How can we be patient? By knowing that this world is not eternal. Trials and suffering isn't eternal. Hope is eternal in God's promises.

Patience is learned because of the troublesome times we face in this world. Trouble is a universal part of life in a fallen world. Acts 14:22 **"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."** Paul told Timothy to **"join with me in suffering for the gospel"** and **"all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"** (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus told His disciples **"If they persecuted me, they will persecute you"** (John 15:20). 2 Thessalonians 1:4 **"we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure."**

Some of whom James is writing were suffering at the hands of the wicked rich. In one of the most difficult responses for a believer, James urges his readers to be patient in this trial. In 1 Peter 2:23 we learn how our response should be, albeit difficult, **"And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."** James was wise enough to know that believers might react to persecution wrongly, even Paul lashed out at illegally being struck by the order of the high priest, Acts 23:3 **"God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall."**

Let's define the word patient, it comes from a compound word meaning "long-anger" and is where we would get "long tempered". Proverbs 15:18 **"A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute."** It would be wise for us to follow our Lord's example, Psalms 86:15 **"But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth."**

There are two words used to define patience in the NT. One is translated endurance or patience in James 1:3-4. This word primarily means enduring trying circumstances, the other literally has the meaning of enduring difficult people. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14 **"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."** We are to be patient in our circumstances and patient with people.

Application: One of the most difficult things to learn as a believer is patience. We are to be patient in our trials and circumstances. We are to be patient with others when they are unruly, stray or are outright mean to us.

BE PATIENT NOW, THE COMING OF THE LORD IS NEAR - VS. 7B-8

James 5:7-12

James speaks of the coming of the Lord. We are like Abraham in anticipating the return of our Lord, **“For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”** (Hebrews 11:10). For this reason the more a church is persecuted, the more they look for God.

Until the coming of the Lord, the Greek word *parousia* is an important NT word. It's most commonly used in the NT for the second coming of Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 2:19 **“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”** In fact, *parousia* refers more to than just coming, it refers to a presence. The best English translation would be “arrival.” This glorious truth appears more than 500 verses throughout the Bible.

Jesus spoke much about His return. He taught His return would be preceded by definite signs, He portrayed His coming as dramatic, it will be a time of separation when the redeemed are gathered in God's presence, and the lost banished from it. Therefore, every Christian is to live in hope of the certainty of Christ's return. 1 Peter 4:7 **“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.”**

The illustration given here about the farmer is paramount to our waiting and patience for the Lord's return during times of trials. The word “strengthen” literally has a meaning of “to establish or to make fast and confirm.” Believers recognize that the trouble of this time is short and temporary and thus our eyes are fixed on the blessed hope, Titus 2:13 **“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”**

Application: In times of unjust suffering, trials and other difficulties the hope of the believer is not on things or men here on earth, but on the hope of His return.

DO NOT COMPLAIN - Vs. 9

Difficult times can cause believers to become impatient, frustrated and complain against the brethren. The word actually can mean “*to groan within oneself*” and is a bitter, resentful spirit that manifests itself in one's relationship with others. The fact that this complaining will lead to our giving an account, James warns not to complain in the midst of trials, because we will be judged for our actions. Revelation 22:12 **“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”**

Application: Christians are to live as if Christ could return at any moment. And living in light of that scenario will keep our complaining down and our hope fixed.

BE AN EXAMPLE - Vs. 10-11

James 5:7-12

Whether we realize it or not, our lives that we live outside the church reflect what we truly believe. Rejection of God's prophets in the OT is not uncommon. Rejection of the gospel and high views of Scripture for the believer in this hostile world isn't uncommon either. Rejection of God's word by Israel and others is often described as "stiff-necked, rebellious and calloused" people. Some examples, David was hunted by Saul, Elijah faced hostility from Ahab and his lovely wife, Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet endured opposition his entire ministry. Daniel was thrown into the lions den, Hosea endured heartbreaking marriage, Amos faces lies and scorn, John the Baptist was beheaded and Hebrews 11 commends a host of prophets who looked for the blessed hope.

Application: Today in the midst of hostility, trouble and trials, we are to point others to Christ. Thus we can do so because our hope isn't fixed on temporal things, but eternal ones.

DON'T SWEAR - Vs. 12

No this isn't using vulgar language. In context here it means the taking of oaths. Ephesians 4:29 **"Let no unwholesome words proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as it for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."** The Jews had developed a complex system of swearing oaths. They brought this into the church and abused it. A description of what an oath was in these times is *"when no written contracts existed, oaths served to bind agreements between people. To take an oath was to attest what one said was true, to call God to witness to that, and to invoke His punishment if one's word was violated."*

The Bible does not forbid the taking of oaths. The world is filled with liars and there are times when it is necessary. Oaths are taken when in court, being ordained, and getting married. But many people were swearing by "the temple, by Abraham" and other things, thus supposedly avoiding the judgement of God. One might say they were swearing with their fingers crossed.

People of integrity have no need to swear elaborate oaths to convince others of their truthfulness. This is why Jesus proclaimed anything beyond this is evil, Matthew 5:37 **"But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil."**