

James

I. Introduction

- A. **James 5:7-11** . . . Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. [8] You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. [9] Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. [10] As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.
- B. Prayer

II. Patience In The Face Of Injustice and Persecution

- A. **James 5:7-8** . . . Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. [8] You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.
 - 1. The context here comes from the six preceding verses and is one of Christians suffering under the injustices and oppression of the rich and powerful – who are either outside or inside the church. However, there are two minor points I want to make before we dig into this portion of James.
 - 2. **First:** I believe we can use the principle taught here and apply it to any suffering we might experience from the ungodly behavior of others who are over us and more powerful than us.
 - 3. **Second:** If the one oppressing us is a church member, we should humbly and graciously follow Christ's teaching in **Matthew 18:15-17**. If you take your concern all the way to the church and the church does not handle the matter in the God-prescribed way, then you should drop back and apply the principle taught here.
- B. **Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.**
 - 1. In this context, the word patient means persevering or enduring trials and suffering for a time. The context here speaks of enduring **UNTIL** the return of Christ. However, to give this a broader application, we

can add that we are to patiently endure **UNTIL** either the return of Christ or until God changes the circumstances and brings relief.

- a. This means that our response as Christians to such treatment is to bear up patiently, without complaint, without ill-will toward the offending person or people, and without seeking revenge.
 - b. In other words, we are to pass through such times of injustice and oppression in a manner that shows the presence and power of God in us and manifests godliness to the glory of God. Or we could say, we are to patiently persevere in doing good.
2. There are three scriptures I want us to look at because they speak clearly to what our thinking, attitude, and behavior is to be when we find ourselves being oppressed and unjustly treated by the rich or by others who have power over us:
- a. **Romans 12:14, 17-21** . . . [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. [17] Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. [19] Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. [20] "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." [21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 - b. **Matthew 5:43-48** . . . You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
 - c. **I Peter 2:21-23** . . . For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, [22] Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] 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.

3. These three scripture portions present us with some lofty examples of godliness. And the reality is, this kind of heart, this kind of thinking, this kind of meekness, and this kind of humility is not natural to us. In fact, we will not rise to these levels of godliness unless we prepare ahead of time to get our heart and our thoughts, our mouth and our behavior in the right place so that when the testing comes, we will be ready to pass the test.
4. And who better to learn from now, before the hard times come, than from Christ, who urges us to take His yoke upon our own shoulders and learn of Him, for He is meek and humble of heart (**Matthew 11:29**).
5. I don't know that I need to say this, but simply as a reminder: there is no putting on the meekness and humility of Christ without first putting off our anger and vindictiveness and pride and anything else that stands in the way of becoming like Christ in this area.
6. And before moving on, remember, it is the meek who inherit the earth, not the strong, not the rich, not the powerful, not the angry, not the cunning, not the mean, but the meek.

C. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient.

1. God provides us a real life example of patient waiting. And there are two points I would like us to see in this example.
2. **First**, the farmer knows what he is up against. He knows that the lack of rain or too much rain or wind or hail can ruin the crop. He knows that certain bugs or insects or disease can destroy his crop. But he also knows that he cannot rush the time it takes to go from the planted seed to a crop that is ready to be harvested. And so he waits patiently. In this same way, godly patience in the face of injustice knows the risks, and yet in spite of the risks, godly patience knows such waiting cannot be rushed. God will deliver when God chooses to deliver, and that is comfort enough for the one who trusts in God.
3. **Second**, neither faith in God, nor Christ-like meekness and humility, nor godly patience prevents us from feeling the reality of what we are going through. Injustice, suffering, persecution – it all hurts, if not physically, than certainly mentally and emotionally. Therefore, God is not asking us to pretend life does not have its painful moments or hours or weeks or even years. Real pain is real pain. What God

asks of us is that we (1) trust in Him and (2) treasure Him above all else and (3) make Him our source of security and protection and comfort so that are able to regulate what we are feeling, and in so doing, prevent our feelings from controlling us.

- a. For example, just as Christ felt the pain of the whip, and thorns, and fists, and rods, the plucking of His beard, the nails, and the slow suffocation on the cross, so we will feel the unjust suffering that is forced on us.
- b. However, Christ prepared Himself for those days of suffering so that in the midst of them He was able to keep His feelings, emotions, and fearful thoughts in check – while continuing to put Himself in His Father’s hands so as to endure to the end.
- c. In the same way, through preparation, faith, prayer, and discipline, we can keep our thoughts and feelings in check as we patiently endure injustices until Christ returns or God intervenes.

D. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

1. How do we strengthen our hearts for the day of trial, injustice, persecution, and suffering?
2. We begin by examining our lives to see what changes need to be made in order to be prepared for such times. For example, what do we need to learn, what part of our thinking needs to change, what current behaviors need to change, what habits need to be established, what part of our faith needs to be strengthened, in what ways does our prayer life need to be developed, and what role will the church and our fellow believers play in our lives for gaining needed growth?
3. After careful self-examination – and you may need outside help with this is you are not accustomed to doing this – we need to make a plan for getting from where we are to where we need to be in order to be properly prepared for the hard times of injustice and persecution.
4. Then we need to work that plan. Working your plan may include:
 - a. Studying God’s word for the purpose of learning how God wants you to live as a Christian – that is, what He wants you to do and doesn’t want you to do, for learning how to measure specific parts of your life by God’s word – so you know where you are and how far you need to go to live up to what God says.
 - b. Memorizing God’s word – at least those parts that speak to you about how God wants you to live so you have His word with you at all times and can examine yourself against His word in any situation.

- c. Working your plan may include learning to pray for yourself – being honest with God about your current condition and serious about what you long to become in a particular area of Christian growth. This kind of praying requires:
 - (1) Confessing sin and asking God’s help in hating the sin or sins you have long loved or treasured or easily returned to.
 - (2) Asking God to show you where you are failing or missing His will in a particular area, and for grace and strength to do what is right.
 - (3) Asking God to teach you what you need to know and do to live up to what He says.
 - (4) Consider scripture prayers and prayer hymns to give you ideas and guidance for your own praying.
 - d. Finding ways to build your faith and work at strengthening your confidence in God and in God’s working in you, for you, and through you. Purposeful, careful, disciplined obedience in areas where disobedience has been too easy is a good way to build your faith in God.
 - e. Working your plan may include identifying what small, maybe even seemingly insignificant things in your life (character, thoughts, beliefs, values, habits) weakens you or easily turns you aside from being faithful through hard times, especially the hard times brought on by some injustice? Then take appropriate action to put off the old nature and put on Christ in the area identified, persevering until the change becomes natural for you.
 - f. Counting the cost of remaining patiently faithful (waiting for God to right the wrongs, bring justice) by examining what it means to remain patient under such circumstances.
5. Like the patient farmer, we cannot rush the time it takes to get through an unjust situation. But neither can we be idle during the sowing and the growing season and expect to reap a harvest. Growing in Christ-likeness takes purpose, diligence, daily effort, and perseverance – all of which is necessary if you are to come into an unjust situation and endure it patiently.

E. **James 5:9** . . . Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

- 1. Possibly the most difficult injustice or oppression to endure is that which comes from within the church by others who claim faith in God

and yet are oppressing you unjustly. Our most ready response to unjust treatment by fellow Christians or other church members or church leadership is “They should know better!” And when they do not listen to reason or God’s word concerning their ungodly behavior, our next response is likely to be anger and open condemnation.

2. As I said earlier, there is a way to address sinful behavior toward us by other Christians, and we are wise to use this God provided means. But when we have used it and still the ungodly behavior persists, it is time to be meek and humble of heart like Christ – for He too, was mistreated – not just by His own countrymen, but by His won countrymen who counted themselves good, righteous, religious Jews.
3. I realize that for those enduring such unjust treatment from fellow Christians or church members, patiently enduring their treatment can seem disturbingly unfair. And unfair it is, yet this is what God asks of us (remember who inherits the earth!).
4. Why? Because judgment and vengeance are to remain in His hands. Yes, we can do our part in trying to restore justice, but if the injustice continues, we are to step back and patiently endure while leaving the restoring of justice up to God from that point on.
5. If we do not step back, but continue to fight for our rights, we put ourselves in the place of requiring God’s judgment and justice, and you do not want to be in that position, I assure you. And so God says: Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

F. **James 5:10-11** . . . As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

1. The prophets are an excellent example of what we have just been talking about because they were persecuted by their own people. And why were they persecuted and even killed? Simply for speaking God’s truth to them about their own wayward behavior, and for telling them of God’s coming judgment for their sinful behavior. How unjust is that?
2. And then there is Job – there was no easily seen, known, or understood reason for his suffering. Based on his righteous life, we can rightly conclude his suffering was unjust – at least from the

human perspective. Yet Job patiently endured his time of suffering without turning against God or cursing God or walking away from God. Surely there are times in our lives when we cannot make sense of the injustice we are experiencing – either at home or at work or in the neighborhood or in some other place – and yet our experience is real and it hurts. When you are in such a situation, make Job your inspiration and persevere like he persevered.

III. Conclusion

A. This portion of James ends with these hope-filled words: **You have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**

1. Whatever the reason for the injustices and oppression we may face, and however long each situation may last, God will right the wrongs – bringing His judgment on the evil-doers and showing compassion and mercy to those being oppressed.
2. Though it may seem hard, our role as God's children is to put our lives and our well-being in His hands. And when we have done what we can to seek justice – within God's boundaries of godliness, we are to patiently endure until God frees us.
3. If we live only in this life, and death is the end – such patient enduring is obviously foolish. But because we live forever, there is no wiser option set before.
4. May we take it upon ourselves to prepare to live this way for God, and may God grant us the grace and strength to live this way for Him.