

JAMES 5:7-12
PATIENCE and ENDURANCE

INTRO

We know that heart health is crucial in the physical sense, but it is more important in the spiritual realm. Heart disease is a leading cause of illness and death, but spiritual heart disease has eternal consequences. The good news is that physical heart disease can be treated with the right practices, medication, and perhaps surgery. Spiritual heart disease can also be treated with certain practices and habits. In fact we are told to **Prov 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.**

As an echo of OT Proverbial wisdom, James reminds us of the importance of the heart and the inner life of the believer.

7 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 doors. 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. 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

These verses are built around the themes of patience and endurance /perseverance v. 7,8,10 and 10, 11

RJ Knowling – Patience =self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate against a wrong. Steadfastness = to not easily succumb under suffering.

Patient endurance is needed when we are suffering at the hands of the oppressive rich, v.1-6. We can do so in a godly manner because the Lord is coming back.

Patience is a verbal noun – it is in the active voice, not passive.

It is not our natural response, but it is supernatural – fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, PATIENCE,

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Patience isn't a feeling; it is something we do.

"It is what we do when all our other doing won't fix things" – Habig

There are some things we can fix and there are some that we can't. We must know the difference.

Practicing patience is demanding and it is theological:

v. 7 Demanding

v. 7 The farmer is cited as an example of patience – he knows there isn't anything he can do about the rains. He can plow and plant according to the seasons, but he can't make it rain. This was written before the days of large irrigation equipment and government subsidies. It is HARD WORK in which so much is beyond your control. There are so many opportunities for bad things to happen – drought, blight, insects, storms, etc. Do what you can do, then BE PATIENT.

So too, brothers, we must be like the farmer. After we've done what we can do, we must practice patience. This example reminds us that the Christian life is a long process, just like farming or gardening.

What are the Alternatives to patience and endurance?

- Control – our schedule, time, relationships, feelings, etc. But something out of our control will break through at some time.
- Self-medication with various drugs or activities even exercise, sleep or Netflix
- Going negative toward God, church, the Bible, Christians. We allow ourselves to think that we'll feel better if we can bash God and blame Christians or other people for our woes.

No surprise, but those alternatives don't really work.

We in 21st century America have been lulled into a delusion that says, "Life isn't supposed to be this hard."

This is a relatively new mindset in human history. Previous generations knew that life was hard. They didn't live with the illusion that everything would be done now – Drive thru meals, not just fast food; meals delivered to your door; 2 day delivery or less for many items purchased online; instant hot running water, lights at the flick of a switch, electronic communication –audio and video- around the world at our fingertips, InstaPot and Instagram.

In the face of this instant world, we are called to PRACTICE PATIENCE.

Patience is **THEOLOGICAL** and **TELEOLOGICAL** (there is an 'end'/telos in the mind of God)– This patience is not what we find in ourselves v. 7-8 it is connected to " the coming of the Lord", "Establish your hearts because the coming of the Lord is at hand".

"Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace", Hebrews 13:9

There are **FOUR** references to a forward look: v.7,8 the Lord is coming; v. 9 The Lord is at the door; v. 10-11 speak of a "telos" or end in view, and v. 12 speaks of the potential of future condemnation.

James gives examples of patience to follow:

v. 8 Like the farmer **YOU ALSO** (ya'll) Be patient; strengthen your hearts- both are **IMPERATIVES**.

– Luke 9 – Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem

Lk 22 Jesus to Peter, "when you have turned, strengthen your brethren

1 Thess 3:13 .."so that God may establish your hearts blameless..."

In times of trial, don't be passive, fretting, and worried, but be active in being patient and strengthening your **HEARTS**.

Our hearts are strengthened by focusing on eternity and the promises of the gospel.

We are to live in light of the return of Christ – watch, wait, be on the alert.

NT – the lord is near = we are on the verge of it, so live in light of it.

v. 9 The Lord is Judge – James doesn't name Jesus often, but he refers to him quite a bit.

The lord is at the **DOORS** – plural.

Jesus is the ultimate and final fixer.

EX: "The Equalizer", never seen it, but based on ads you get a sense of what it is about.

1985 version -A retired Intelligence Agent turned private detective helps various threatened clients to equalize the odds.

2021 An enigmatic figure who uses her extensive skills to help those with nowhere else to turn.

James is telling us that we can be patient and strengthen our hearts because The Lord is coming to Judge, and He is the ultimate 'equalizer'.

V. 8-9 the LORD IS COMING SOON???

The tension in the scripture about the Lord being near and waiting on the Lord's return is real and puzzling for us. Scripture is not afraid of having us live in a sense of tension. In fact we can learn from it, especially in this passage from James.

Here is the principle: PAY ATTENTION TO THE TENSION.

We are to be engaged in the world- fair business, seeking wisdom for life, caring for the widow and orphan, dealing with conflict and money in a godly way, etc YET we are to have an eye on eternity. It's the eternal perspective that shapes how we do the other things day to day.

Life looks different when viewed from eternity. What seems sooo important now may well pale in significance in light of eternal realities.

EX: Those who have traveled to the developing world have found that many of the things we take for granted here are just not available. That's often true of traveling to other first world countries. I mean, in France, we couldn't buy grits – quelle honte

After being in a developing country it is easy to gain perspective on some of our routine struggles by reminding ourselves that this is a "First world problem"

ex: My ice maker isn't working; the ice in my ice maker bin keeps freezing together; the drive-thru line was soooo long; my google calendar isn't syncing with all my devices.

Instead of "First world problem", we need to remember "THIS WORLD problem." **Whatever it is that bothers us now won't be on the radar when we get to heaven.**

The life of faith is one in which we see the life, death and resurrection of Christ behind us and His return before us. If his death 2000 years ago still holds meaning for us, then his return should have meaning, even if it is still 200 or 2000 years away.

We must remember that "soon" and "at the door" are time bound concepts that don't have the same meaning for God as they do for us.

It's a bit like going into Narnia, innit?

v. 9 WHAT DOES PATIENCE LOOK LIKE? What is the impact of strengthening our hearts?

- Don't grumble against one another.

If only James talked about things that impact our real lives. When it comes to the issues of the day or issues of life, especially where God's Word is silent, we MUST take care to not grumble against one another. On issues where scripture is clear, then we must speak the truth in love.

James is calling for the practice of self-restraint as one waits for God to bring justice.

Self-restraint is the result of an eternal perspective.

Grumbling is a toxic SEED worth judging. God doesn't forbid it for no reason. He condemns that which eats away at the peace of OUR hearts and the world; it is destructive.

A way to melt your heart to be patient and loving is to think of how much you tax God's patience. Go back to the gospel. THINK of our own poor behavior towards God. If you don't see it, don't see His care, then you lack the engine for becoming a patient person. **You can't beat yourself into patience; you can only repent yourself into it. . He is slow to anger with me and with you. To degree you see it, you'll be patient.**

James may have in mind the sort of injustice mentioned in v. 1-6 at the hands of the rich – either non-believers or believers, or he may be thinking of something else. Either way, If we really believe that God is

Just, sovereign, wise, merciful, a righteous judge, and is coming again, then why are we being so severe with people?

He's not saying, "Don't speak about important issues of life, justice, morality, etc".

He is saying, "Don't complain against each other."

Don't be quick to dismiss others or look at them with contempt.

Live in patience knowing that a righteous resolution is coming.

If you're on the right side of God's plan at that time, then you can rejoice.

If you're not, then you can expect a righteous judgment.

Some will find the joy of mercy from God; Some will find the righteous justice from God. No one will get injustice from the hand of God.

Complaining against each other is a form of impatience and often gets messy and judgmental.

v. 10 – the prophets are another example of suffering in patience. They experienced a lot of resistance while waiting for God to act. They often faced violent opposition.

They looked forward to the coming of the Messiah and of the Day of the Lord. We don't know if they saw the two pronged arrival of the Christ – born, suffered, died, risen and then to return a second time. But for the audience of James they were certainly focused on the return of Christ in light of his saving work through his life, death, and resurrection. Virtually all of the prophets met resistance, but persevered with hope and a life of obedience.

JOB is cited for his patience in suffering. His story is long and familiar to the audience. Job is confronted and counseled and blessed again by God.

Puritan author Christopher Love notes that "James could have commented on Job's impatience as well as his patience." Job whined and griped his way through much of the book. But to underscore what is said in 5:11 about God's mercy and compassion, James uses Job as an example of patience.

Love notes something that is so very important for us today...

"But God reckons his people not by what is bad in them, but by what is good in them." [Sermons, vol. 3 "On Growing in Grace"]

In God's eyes we are not defined by our sin and failure, but by the righteous of Christ, IF WE KNOW HIM BY FAITH.

v. 11 – "see the purpose or the end" of what God is doing, and know that He is compassionate and merciful.

The Lord is indeed "compassionate and merciful" in nothing so much as this: that he considers the good things that we do as the chief evidence of our character and overlooks so much of the bad. In other words, when he comes the Lord will be looking for what he can praise in his children! [Motyer, 179]

Do you believe that?

v. 12 James again echoes the words of his older brother from Matt 5:34

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

WE must not be those who seek to include an escape clause in the way we word things. Jesus spoke in a context in which people spoke in such a way as to give the appearance of a binding oath while the actual wording contained an escape hatch.

EX: movie 42 – The owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey, was seeking a temporary manager. His choice was a man, Burt Shotton, who recently retired, who had told his wife, “I promise I won’t put a uniform back on again.”

Rickey said, “Well, you can manage without wearing a uniform. Just wear a coat and tie.”

When we become impatient we must not resort to taking the name of the Lord in vain or making rash vows.

As believers, we live under the banner of God’s truth, so we are able to say “yes” or “no” and mean it. Even if that yes or no leads to opposition or persecution, we can hold on because we know that the righteous Judge is at the door, and he will straighten it all out in the end.

There is a joy and freedom in this that is unknown to those who live according to the shifting schemes of the spirit of the age.

Above all people, the Christian is free to experience a life of Joy.

Dan Naulty has referred to living “eschatologically,” especially in the matter of joy.

Every joy in life is increased when it is remembered that, no matter how great, it is only a foretaste of still greater joy to come. And that is the greatest part of its joy or of any joy.

If joy is not immortal, if our happiest moments and experiences in life are nothing more than temporary surges of feeling in the body, signifying nothing, promising nothing, pointing to nothing, then the joy we find in such experiences must be severely diminished by the recognition that this is the best we’ll ever get or feel and that it will be gone in a moment.

How meaningful is the greatest joy if you know that at any moment you could die and pass into non-existence?

EX: If you were told that you could do your favorite thing, or the top thing on your “bucket list”, but would die immediately afterwards, how fulfilling or enjoyable would it be?

To paraphrase Tennyson’s In Memoriam...XXXV

Such joy would be “half dead to know that it shall die”

NOT SO WITH THE hope and joy found in Christ.

We can have the fullness of joy knowing that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, He guarantees our own.

AMEN

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