

James 5:7-12

“Illustrations of patience”

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I. Intro

The start of our teaching today in chapter 5 verse 7 is a transition word “therefore” and the interpretation rule that goes with this word is: “whenever you see the word therefore in a text you need to stop and ask yourself what’s it there for”. In this case the answer to that question is that this section is a summation with an exhortation to do something based upon the above information. James has been giving his readers the purpose for life as believers, our maturity. He has given them positive things that will stimulate their maturity and negative things to avoid that will hinder their maturity in Christ. Now in verses 7-12 James goes back to the same exhortation that he used in the first chapter in the third verse that of the necessity of patience if we are going to grow in the grace of our Lord. These messianic believers wondered the purpose of life seeing that Jesus hadn’t altered their present circumstances for the better. James told them that the purpose of the coming of Jesus was personal transformation not political transformation. He further told them that personal transformation was a process brought about by an event unlike their salvation and their future glorification which with the same event was instantaneous. That process was aided by difficulties...pressures from the outside and the inside and that only through endurance...(PATIENCE) could that process produce the right result in our hearts. They had been under the wrong idea that Jesus’ coming was going to “right all the wrongs” but instead His first coming was all

about correcting, changing and challenging our formally corrupted heart! Six times in six verses James uses the words: Patience, Endurance and Perseverance as these are the key to maturity. You can do anything if you have the patience; why you can even carry water in a bucket full of holes if you wait until it freezes!

Vs. 7 Why exhorting his readers to have patience James use two different Greek words:

- A. In verses 7-8 and 10 it is a word that means “long tempered” which seems to be directed at a person who is being encouraged not to lose they’re at another who is trying their patience.
- B. In verse 11 it is a word that means to “remain under” which speaks of endurance under great stress, it describes a person who stays put when every ounce in them wants to run away. This kind of patience seems to be on a situation or circumstance instead of a person.

The question that James answers in this section is just how a person can experience this kind of patience towards either another person or a circumstance? To illustrate this James employs three illustrations:

II. Vs. 7-9 The Farmer

1. Vs. 7-9 ***The Farmer: Here the idea is that we need to exercise patience when we don't control the elements of life.*** James paints the illustration of the believer as a type of “*spiritual farmer*” who has to endure the elements with great patience before he can ever expect to see his crop. The early church father from Greece in AD 150 informed history that both James and Jude were farmers, and this could explain why James often used illustrations from agriculture. A farmer has to be obedient and execute his work by faith knowing that he doesn't control the elements necessary to reap the reward of his labor. First century farmers didn't irrigate and were complete dependent upon the rains, to little rain and the crops would wither to much rain and they would rot. Because of this Jewish farmers would plow the soil in fall after the early rains would come to soften the soil. Then they would count on the “later rains” of February – March to water their

crops into further maturity. Several months of patiently waiting to see if the weather and soil would grant them success. Why would the farmer wait so long? Well he valued what the work would produce, he wanted the fruit of his labors and the only way he could achieve that was by patiently waiting for it. How long until we see the harvest? James says, “until the coming of the Lord”. Our hearts and lives are the soil and the word of God is the seed and there is a right time to plow out our follow ground and a right time to plant. There are times when the soil of our hearts are hard, and the Lord will send some rain into our soil and bust it up with His plow in order to plant. But he also sends His rain on the just and the unjust as well as His sunshine upon the soil and seeds to cause them to grow and become ready for harvest. That is the secret of endurance: It is God who is at work in our lives producing a harvest. He has planted the “fruit of the spirit” and the only way He can cause the crop to become healthy is to cause trials to come upon us. So instead of becoming bitter at God for the trials, we ought to become patient and thankful as He will reap His harvest in our lives. James says, “*establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand*”. James gives a great way to develop patience and its by establishing your heart. The phrase in the Greek means to make firm your hearts. It carries the idea to strengthen your heart or to support something in order to make it immovable, we need to put steel in our hearts. **I believe that there are four ways in which to harden your endurance: Consistence in the Word of God, in prayer, in fellowship and in service.** When that is combined with the length of time we are to be engaged in those four things to build up our endurance you get a fuller picture that if we want to continue to mature like a farmer we will need to, “**Keep working while we are waiting**”! Verse 9 seems to stand alone as James moves from farming to not grumbling against one another but in reality the connection is that when we become impatient we tend to get grumpy at others. We blame others for our situation or circumstances. James issues a warning not to do that which again indicates that though we are waiting patiently for the Lord to work we are not idling in are waiting but busy. In fact, farming is one of those neighborly occupations where farmers or ranchers often help out their neighbors. If we start using our farming tools on each other we won't be able to use them on our crops!

III. Vs. 10 The Prophet

2. Vs. 10 **The Prophets: The next area of illustration is the prophet which deals with needing to have patience when we are serving the Lord and facing discouragement and disappointments.** Jesus used prophets as an illustration in His Sermon on the mount as an example over persecution. Here was a group of people who were obeying God's call on their life serving Him and His people but suffered from the very people they were called to serve! They were preaching and teaching in the name of the Lord, yet the outcome wasn't popularity or prosperity it was persecution and rejection. Often time satan will tell the servant of God that they are suffering because they of sin or being unfaithful in their service. But the truth is that their suffering may very well be because they were obediently serving

the Lord. Paul told Timothy in his 2nd letter to him in 3:12 that “*All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” Jesus’ obedience led to the cross and many time so will ours! Furthermore, they weren’t exempt, Elijah who announced God’s judgment to wicked king Ahab of a drought had to go through the same drought! Saint’s “*The will of God will never lead you to a place where the grace of God cannot sustain you!*” Daniel and Joseph had to share in the hardships, but the Lord delivered them, and He will us as well if we don’t lose heart! Oft times it is the difficult times that we face while we are obediently speaking the truth to people that authenticates the words God has called us to speak. *God doesn’t have His servants speak out greeting cards sentiments to make folks feel better He has them speak out transforming truth born out in their own life and experiences!* *From the first two illustrations we glean that James would have us keep working while are waiting like farmers and to keep serving despite the opposition like prophets!* James would experience this himself according to secular historians as he met a violent death from Annas the High Priest when he was taken to the pinnacle of the temple and thrown off because he refused to denounce his half-brother Jesus as being God the Son the prophesized Messiah.

IV. Vs. 11-12 Job

3. Vs. 11-12 *Job: The final area that we need to exercise patience in is when our lives are falling apart, and disaster is all around us!* James is the first and only New Testament writer to mention Job. The truth is saint’s we cannot preserve unless we are under a trial and there is no better example in the Bible of a man who was under a trial then Job. The story of Job actually starts out in heaven in a conversation that Job must have learned about from God after the trial was over. When God mentioned Job to satan as being an example of a righteous man, satan implied that the only reason for this was God’s blessings upon him. Satan said, “*If you take you hand off of Job he’ll curse You instead of praise You.*” So, God allows satan to do just that and in four blows Job’s life is decimated. A messenger arrives to tell Job that the Sabeans have taken all his oxen and donkeys and killed his servants. Then a second messenger arrives and tells Job that fire from heaven has consumed all his sheep and his servants who were watching them. Another servant arrives and tells Job that the Chaldeans have taken all his camels and executed his servants who were with them. Finally, a fourth servant comes and tells Job that all 10 of his children (seven sons and three daughters) were killed when the house they were in fell on them. After this he contracted boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. Job went out to sit on an ash heap on a manure pile in grief when his wife comes to him to encourage to curse God and commit suicide. Then his three best friends come to tell him that all this has happened to him because of some unconfessed sin. Job had lost everything but his love for God. So even though his house was a pile of manure he made it a throne

in the presence of God. And even though Job was covered with boils those sores were badges of honor. Job's actions made Satan eat his words. Job had to suffer, for grace and love do not come any other way than through great trials and suffering. **There are never any victories without battles, not peaks without valleys, if you want the blessing than you must have patience in carrying the burden! Before God can honor a servant He must first humble a servant!** We will never grow more in love with God than when we allow Him to break us and cause us to only be able to stand in our complete dependence upon Him! Job contradicted the thought that when God blesses a person they will be wealthy and healthy and if they aren't it's because they are sinning or aren't walking with God. Job was a righteous man and yet he suffered, and God found no evil in him and the fact is neither could Satan. Job is an illustration that trials and suffering have a higher purpose than merely correcting us, it's to bring us to maturity. Job didn't flinch though he questioned as he said in 19:25-27 "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*" Job confessed in 42:5-6 of his growth through patience saying, "*I have heard of You by the hearing of my ears, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" God never takes us through fiery furnace that He isn't there with us while His hand is on the thermostat! His grace is sufficient for me!

The final aspect of this deals with not making oaths to God and this has to do with trying to make deals with God when we are going through trials and tribulations. Job made no deals as he said in Job 1:21-22 "*Naked I came out on my mother's womb, and naked I shall return: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*" When we have to swear to tell the truth than we have just admitted that we are a liar from the start! Oath taking in James times was a form of profanity and was used by rabbis to exert control over their followers. True Christian character doesn't require an oath it requires integrity as seen in consistent behavior.