

## Striving to Obtain Patience # 19

James 5: 7-12

Our text this evening deals with an aspect of our Christian lives that many, myself included, could use more of, and that is patience. I will admit that the lack of patience is one of my weaknesses. I seem to have improved in that area, but I know there is room for more improvement. Some possess more patience than others, but as we will see, we all need patience as we live among the world.

If you recall, James dealt with patience in Chapter one of our study. [Jam.1:3-4 – Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.](#) <sup>[4]</sup> [But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.](#) There we discovered patience dealt with *the situations and circumstances of life*. Here the word translated patience has a different meaning. It means "a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion—generally to passion." <sup>i</sup> James has dealt extensively with the challenges and opposition of the believer, and here he exhorts our longsuffering and patience with those who offend or anger us. *Thus his advice is, "Brother, calm down, be endowed with longsuffering, lengthen your temper; don't lose it, hold it."* <sup>ii</sup>

Surely we all could use more patience in dealing with others at certain moments in life. We must keep in mind that we are living examples of Christ, obligated to represent Him well in every area of life. A kind word offered in patience while facing anger or opposition isn't typically expected and will reveal our faith to others. Let's take a few moments to consider the [conclusions](#) James offers regarding our patience as we think on: [Striving to Obtain Patience](#).

**I. The Perspective about Patience (7-9)** – James speaks to the perspective each of us should possess regarding patience. Keep in mind this deals with people and relationships rather than situations and circumstances. Consider:

**A. The Admonition (7a)** – [Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.](#) This was not an option given for consideration, but an admonition with the expectation of obedience. James knew the difficulties they faced. He too had faced much opposition for his faith in Christ, but he knew the believer must exercise patience toward those without, even those who mistreated them.

- It is interesting to note this admonition was not bound by time. The believer was, and is, expected to exercise patience until the coming of the Lord. In essence we are to be longsuffering toward others until we meet the Lord. This is expected of each of us. That certainly challenges me. I am more patient at times than others, but I am admonished to show patience all the time, every day and in every circumstance.

**B. The Anticipation** (7b) – Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Here we find a simple illustration that beautifully describes the benefit of patience. The husbandman (farmer) sows his seed in the ground and patiently waits for the precious fruit that will develop only after the needed rains have come. He doesn't receive an immediate reward, but he knows the effort and patience will be well worth the wait. His patience is tempered by the anticipation of a bountiful harvest.

- So it is with our patience as well. We are ambassadors of the King, representing Him in all we do. We have been called to labor in the harvest. We know the harvest will not be immediate, but the fruit it produces will be well worth the wait. The harvest takes on many forms, revealing benefit for those around us and even ourselves. Our patience and longsuffering may well make the difference in someone's salvation. We will definitely be a better witness for Christ if we exercise patience. We also grow and mature spiritually as we learn to show patience to those around us. The benefit becomes two-fold.

**C. The Preparation** (8) – Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Even in the face of difficulty there was no place to give up or quit the journey. They had faced hardship in the past and more would certainly come, but the believer must exercise patience and establish his heart to endure. James reveals the Lord's coming was imminent; it could literally happen at any moment. There was no time to waste, no place to sit down; they must press on faithfully in the journey.

- We accept these truths and embrace them, and yet many times we fail to prepare for the journey. Discouragement often hounds us and we are tempted to abandon our efforts. We too must press on, even when it seems no one understands or cares and we are all alone. The phrase *stablish your hearts* actually has the idea of "*propping up*." It speaks of personal effort. We know that God cares and that He will strengthen us in the journey, but there will be times when we must take the initiative and determine in our own hearts to continue in the race!

**D. The Sanctification** (9) – Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Our lack of patience with others can result in bitterness and judgmental attitudes. It is easy to blame others for our lack of faith or defeat. James reveals that we must avoid such bitterness and grudges against another. We must seek purity before the Lord, ridding our lives of such emotion and behavior.

- God will judge such activity in our lives. Our sin was atoned and forgiven on the cross, but it does continue to bear consequences in our lives. If we allow bitterness and undue anger to consume us, we cannot expect God to bless our lives. He will chastise us and punish such rebellion. Jesus knows what is within our hearts, regardless of what we say or do.

## **I. The Perspective about Patience (7-9)**

**II. The Pursuit of Patience (10-11)** – Here James discusses the believer’s pursuit of patience. Many times patience doesn’t come naturally; we have to work at it to possess it. Consider:

**A. The Example Displayed (10)** – *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* No doubt some of the early believers were tempted to abandon their faith, and walk away from serving the Lord. It must’ve seemed that difficulty and adversity waited at every turn. These were discouraged and tired of dealing with the conflict. James reminds them of the extreme difficulties the prophets of old faced. They were imprisoned, beaten, and threatened with death. Surely they too felt like giving up at times and lashing out in anger, but they endured the affliction and exercised patience. This was expected of them as well.

- Often we face opposition and discouragement, but we have faced nothing compared to many before us. I can’t imagine being burned at the stake or having animal skins sown to me and thrown into an arena with wild beasts. Many around the world are facing the certainty of death if their faith is discovered. Surely we can endure the difficulties we face with patience.

**B. The Endurance Desired (11a)** – *Behold, we count them happy which endure.* Looking at the prophets difficulties from a worldly perspective, they had nothing to rejoice in. However, the world did not understand the peace that God gives. The oppressors couldn’t understand why they endured such torment with patience, but they didn’t enjoy a relationship with the Lord like the prophets. The world could bring opposition, but the peace of God surpassed all suffering.

- We have no way of knowing what we may have to endure, but by the grace and help of God we can. The world may inflict physical and emotional pain, but the peace of God grants happiness and joy that our difficulties cannot defeat. The world might even take our lives, but we will have just begun to live when this physical life is through.

**C. The Enrichment Delivered (11b)** – *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* James offers another vivid reminder revealed in Scripture. They knew the suffering Job endured and the patience he showed in the process. He faced much more adversity and pain than most, and during all of his suffering God was there with Him. God’s mercy and grace was sufficient even for the trials of Job. He was tempted, but he never lost sight of his faith. His patience endured the most extreme trials.

- There is comfort for us in that thought. There will be times when our patience is tried. There will be times when we face difficulties and pain. Our lives will be mixed with adversity, but we are never forsaken. God is always there, and He is more than able to provide. We know the latter end of Job, the time after the suffering, was blessed more abundantly than the beginning. God will honor and reward those who patiently endure!

### **I. The Perspective about Patience** (7-9)

### **II. The Pursuit of Patience** (10-11)

**III. The Priority in Patience** (12) – *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.* James offers a final, important challenge related to our patience. This deals with the dangers of swearing. Often when one loses patience, words are spoken that shouldn't have been. We need to heed this final warning. Notice:

**A. The Emphasis** – *But above all things, my brethren, swear not.* When patience is tried, we are tempted to lash out in anger, and if we aren't very careful, we might even swear or speak profanely. At that moment our testimony is ruined for those who are present. All of the patience we have exhibited in the past is consumed and destroyed in a moment of rage.

- No doubt in a moment of hurt or anger we have all said things we wished we hadn't, but once words are spoken we can't bring them back. As we endure difficulties and our patience is tried, we must guard our hearts so we can hold our tongues. We know that God is sovereign and seeks only that which is pure and it is never right to accuse Him falsely.

**B. The Expression** – *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.* We dealt with this extensively in our study of the Sermon on the Mount and it appears that James further emphasizes that which he had heard our Lord speak. We must bear in mind that James is speaking to the brethren. Much of the opposition they faced came from the Pharisees and Jewish legalists. They were very religious, but extremely overbearing. The Pharisees would never intentionally take the Lord's name in vain, but it must've been the practice of that day to swear by other things rather than the Lord. Such vanity, although not spoken directly at the Lord, was directed toward Him nonetheless. If we swear by anything upon this earth, we have sworn by God's creation.

▪ James isn't advocating we shouldn't be honest or trustworthy, but that we shouldn't engage in vain or profane speech. [Matt.12:36 – But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.](#) We are blessed above all creation with the ability to speak and communicate with such intricate language. Our speech ought always to glorify our Lord and Savior.

▪ So, how do we avoid such pitfalls? The answer is revealed in the text: [but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.](#) Simply we are to speak truth, answer directly, and avoid swearing or profanity. A simple yes or no is quite sufficient without all the swearing and vain adjectives. Much of the swearing we hear today is out of habit anyway. It is useless and offensive, and completely avoidable. I pray that we will honor the Lord in every aspect of our lives, even through our speech. The world will place little value on a testimony that is tainted by uncomely conversation.

**Conclusion:** As we close this evening, I have to ask, do we possess godly patience in the midst of a difficult and trying world? Are we longsuffering toward those who mistreat us or are we quick to lash out in anger? I know that I need to improve in that area and I am sure that I am not alone. As with any aspect of our lives, we must seek the Lord and His help if we are to overcome the struggles of life. Our flesh desires to lash out, but the spirit desires restraint.

The greatest example of patience we have is our Lord, Jesus Christ. If anyone had a reason to lash out in anger, He did. Yet He endured the cruelty and suffering of the cross with patience and restraint. He did not falsely accuse God. We need to follow His example. He alone can change a heart of sin, prone to anger and cursing, to a heart of patience and compassion. If you are not saved, you do not possess the ability to overcome. Seek Jesus for the needs in your life.

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<sup>i</sup> Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid