

James Part 12 - Study Notes

Introduction

We now move from **real faith produces genuine humility** to **real faith produces genuine patience**.

We have all experienced hurt, mistreatment and misunderstanding. These can come in the variety of forms: an intolerable working situation, domestic conflict, issues with parents or children or close friends. Our natural tendency is to retaliate, to return evil for evil, and eye for an eye. Or we bottle it up and allow it to ferment internally where we keep a record of the wrong waiting for the right time to let it burst out. James tells us what to when we've been wronged.

James 5:7a *Therefore be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming.* James moved from the unbelieving rich who oppressed the poor to Christian believers who were victims of the rich peoples oppression. He said **therefore in the light of the fact of the ultimate judgment of the wicked rulers oppressing you, be patient.**

James continued with the theme of Christ's coming in judgment, *until the Lord is coming.* While persecutors should fear Christ's return, believers anticipate His return they patiently enduring suffering. For the believer, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have the supernatural ability to patiently endure suffering that comes.

The exhortation to be patient governs the rest of chapter 5. It is the faith inspired response to a variety of circumstances Christians endure in this world, from putting up with sufferings (James 5:7-11) and to responding to sickness (James 5:14-15). James gave an answer to the questions we face, **how can I do right when I've been wronged?**

James 5:7b-8 *See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.* James said just as a farmer learned to wait patiently through the growing season before he can reap the fruits of his labour, so Christians should be **patient**. The Greek word *makrothymeō* means **long-tempered**, to have a long fuse.

At times we would like to take those people who offend us by the throat. But God has another plan: that we wait on Him, ultimately if need be until He returns. He will hand out justice on those who have persecuted His people.

Patience waiting on the Lord also has a here-and-now application. God has a way of working out His purposes and plans on and every day scale. Being patient in bad circumstances means we deliberately allow God to handle the situation and in **His** own way and **His** own time. Like the farmer waiting for a harvest, we are patient. *⁸ You too, be patient*

James 5:8 continues *and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.* James said to stand firm when we've been wronged. Other versions of the Bible say *strengthen or establish your hearts.* Strengthen refers to support or prop up. Under stress and duress, the heart can grow heavy, but the Spirit of God can lighten the load of the heart weighed down with pressures. Psalm 52:22 says *Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.*

Charles Swindoll, whose material I have used for this sermon series, talks about a **50-20 principle**. It comes from the passage on the life of Joseph. Joseph's brother sold him into slavery and they told his father, Jacob, that he had been killed. As Joseph's life unfolded, he went from an imprisoned slave to the Prime Minister of Egypt. Years later, when the same brothers who sold him, showed up on the scene again, groveling for mercy, Joseph responded with the **50-20 principle**: Genesis 50:20 *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

Unless we can see beyond someone who has wronged us, we will retaliate. This is our natural response. But God works out things for our ultimate good. Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* We need to have a big-picture perspective; 50-20 vision. A shift in perspective from our own limited view to a divine view will help strengthen the heart through all kind of wrongs.

James 5:9-11 *Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

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The third answer to how believes should respond to suffering concerns our actions towards those around us. When our circumstances try our patience and we feel discouraged and frustrated by external pressures, we tend to complain. James warned not to groan, grumble or complain about our brothers and sisters.

It seems strange that when we suffer hardship so we can often internalize our aggression and turn on each other, on the church leadership, even on our family members or pets. We can easily vent our frustration on those around us. On the inside we can become like a tightly wound up spring, exploding on those who are nearest to us at the slightest touch.

In James 4:11-12 we studied that those who speak against or judges a fellow Christian will be subject to the judgment of God. Equally serious, those who point fingers and complain against others Christians will be subject to the disciplining hand of God. God doesn't judge believers with hell but He doesn't let our bad behavior go without discipline.

The ancient Hebrew prophets, who spoke and acted on behalf of God, serve as an example to us for how to suffer patience. James focused on perhaps the greatest example of patience under excruciating suffering: **Job**. Though **Job** endured incomprehensible personal, financial, and physical losses, he refused to give into revenge. He demonstrated his real faith through genuine patience. James reminded us that the suffering of **Job** was temporary, eventually giving way to an abundance of blessing that reflected the compassion and mercy of God. In the same way, those who patiently endure hardship today without grumbling can rely on God's promise of ultimate reward and blessing, whether in this life or in the life to come. It might be today that we need to break the habit of complaining.

James 5:12 *Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.* James said here don't swear. This doesn't refer to the use of profanity. It means here to take an oath. It means calling God into a situation for Him to give validity to our commitment. Such as **I swear to God I'm not lying!** Or as **God is my witness!**

James took this teaching on oaths from Jesus's sermon in Matthew 5:34-37 *But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*

We don't know the historical reasons why they were taking oaths. We do know that they were living under extreme religious, cultural, and economic pressures to deny Christ in their words or deeds. They were put under pressure by swearing certain oaths to lessen the suffering, persecution, hardship, or trial. The cost would be abandoning their savior. James said respond to circumstances with a simple yes or no. We need to let God work out His purposes and for us to be patient.

If we focus on the situation we will get angry. Yes we have been wronged. But as James said we must **be patient**.

Remember the 50:20 principle. A person may seek to do me harm but God can use me as an instrument of His grace. God will get you through this so **be strong**.

Don't focus on someone to blame, or we will complain. God uses others as a means to shape our life. **Don't complain**.

Don't focus on the present. This is tough when we are in the middle of a crisis. **Focus on scriptures to help us think correctly**.

Romans 8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.* 1 Peter 1:6-7 *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Friends we don't know what is in store for us. But God knows. He will get us through it.

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James repeatedly mentions the return of Christ, the judgments and rewards of God, and the coming Kingdom. James 1:12; 2:5, 2:13, 3:1, 5:3, 5:5, 5:7, 5:8,5:9, 5:12. Please study again for your self.