

"The Perfection of Patience"

James 5:1-8

September 20, 2009

by C.W. Powell

“1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. 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. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” (Jas 5:1-8)

There are many ways to look at the life of the Christian. A good teacher will find many different ways to say things. Years ago I read a biography of General “Stonewall” Jackson, the great Confederate General who was the subordinate of General Robert E. Lee. General Jackson was a great battlefield commander and a marvelous motivator of men. He received his nickname at the First Battle of Bull Run where he inspired his troops to stand strong in the line like a “stonewall” and is generally credited with the Confederate victory. He was accidently shot by his own pickets during the battle of Chancellorsville midway through the Civil War and many believe that the death of Jackson was a major reason for the Confederate loss at Gettysburg two months later, not only for the loss of his genius, but perhaps more importantly the demoralization of the Confederate soldier.

Before the Civil War, Jackson had taught in the U. S, Military academy at West Point. It is reported that he was not an excellent teacher. There are many who know a great deal but are unskilled at teaching others. It was reported that Jackson, if someone did not understand something he had said, he would simple repeat what he had said in the same exact words. I guess he figured that he had said it the best way it could be said and it was up to the student to understand.

Reading that account years ago inspired me to be the best teacher I could be, to search for better and imaginative ways to teach and say the same truth, so that not only I could understand, but so that my hearers could understand also.

This is the way of the divine wisdom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did He use many different means of teaching the truth, but His Own Person and work are described in Scripture in many different ways. He is called a Lamb, a Lion, a Branch, a King, Wise Builder, a Potter, a Commander, etc. Thus we read in the Bible:

Ne 9:27 “Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.” How different were the means: Sampson, Gideon, Ehud, Deborah, Samuel, David, etc. It seems that the only common thing that these heroes had was faith in God.

Ps 104:24 “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” The earth is full of riches beyond our imagination.

As the image of God we also of capable of great and manifold activities: Am 5:12 “For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.” We find many different ways of breaking the Ten Commandments and expressing our unbelief! There are only Ten Commandments, but there are thousands of crimes.

Eph 3:10 “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,” God has so many things to reveal in Jesus Christ through the church, that Paul prays that we would be strengthened by might in the inner man, so that Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith, that we might “be rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” [Eph. 3]

And so James, in this wisdom literature of the New Testament, deals with a number of different subjects all tending toward the same thing, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and obedience in terms of that faith. People are different with different temptations and different gifts and callings, but the message is the same, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So now, in the first part of chapter 1, James returns to a theme that he had introduced in chapter One. Patience in the midst of trials and tribulations.

- I. The development of this idea: 1:2-4: “2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”
 - A. We are to be patient, ask the Lord for wisdom, and not rush about frantically in all directions at once. We are to give especially attention to our hearts, and purify them from double-mindedness, the love of the world, and bitter speakings. We are to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, recognizing that the claims of the law are very broad. We are to put away bitterness and evil speaking. The wisdom from below is a fire from

hell that causes us to use our tongues to set everything on fire.

- B. We are to humble ourselves before the Lord: not presuming to add or subtract from God's commandments; not presuming to know the future; not presuming that we do not need to be occupied with doing the good that is before us.
- II. The rich are very often the source of tribulations and trials, and we are to have a godly understanding of the role that wealth has in the Christian life. This idea is developed by James.
- A. First he says that humility is the goal of tribulation and is the reward of patience. After speaking of tribulation and the reward of patience, he warns of double-mindedness, specifically developing this theme that culminates in 4:4 "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
 - B. Then he warns of the those who make too much, and those who make too little, of riches.
 - C. The poor make too much, as if they are the highest good and money will solve all their problems.
 - 1. They are to rejoice that the Lord Jesus exalts them in their poverty. They are filled with envy and strife and evil lusts that war against the soul.
 - 2. They are humiliated, but they are not humbled by their poverty. If they believe in Christ they are exalted above measure, for God does not consider the bank account when He justifies the sinner.
 - 3. The poor are exalted in Christ. But the poor are very often ensnared by the love of money and do very foolish things, not realizing that the true riches of the kingdom of God are not gold and silver, as Solomon tells us many times in Proverbs.
 - 4. It is true of the poor as well as the rich, ye cannot serve God and Mammon. The poor are to rejoice if they have learned this and know their riches in Christ.
 - D. The rich make too little of their riches, take them for granted, and do not realize the snare that wealth can bring to the soul.
 - 1. Because of the love of money the rich can be proud and do great harm to those round about them. Being content in this life, they may imagine that their future is secure, and not realize the danger they are in. "Take thine ease" he says "you are secure for te future, and have much laid up in store for many days. Eat drink and be merry." He doesn't realize that what he has stored in his barn is a very real danger to his eternal well-being; he thinks too little of the danger that his wealth brings to him and he forgets the words of Christ, "It is easier for a camel." "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God."
 - 2. If the rich man has learned that his riches are not the true riches and labors to lay up treasure in heaven, then he also is to rejoice, for this humble him and he is to rejoice in this true humility before God, for this is not of men, but of God.

3. The church is not to contribute to this false view of riches by exalting the rich and debasing the poor, as James tells us in chapter 2.

III. The symphony swells to a crescendo in the first part of chapter five. The end of the love of the world and the reward of patience.

A. The curse of God is on those that love the world and they cannot escape His wrath. He is a jealous God and will brook no rival.

1. The riches of the world are not the true riches:
 - a. Pr. 15:6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
 - b. Pr. 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.
 - c. Pr 8:10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
 - d. Mt 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mt 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
2. The true treasure of a righteous man is the faith, hope, and charity that lives in his heart by the grace of God. These things are from heaven, not from the earth.
 - a. Lu 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.
 - b. Lu 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
 - c. The love for the world that brings forth wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, etc. and all the fruit of the flesh.
 - d. Faith, hope, and charity bring forth love, joy, peace, gentleness, longsuffering and so forth by the Holy Spirit.
3. God's curse rests upon the riches of the world and those who love them. Not those who have money, but those who love money, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.
 - a. They have heaped together their riches, hoarding them selfishly. [Not just the rich-the poor do this, too. Treasuring their pittance. They do not know money for what it is: corrupted, moth-eaten, cankered, rusted, they eat your flesh away until you are a ghost of a person. Judas didn't sell Christ, he sold himself.
 - b. They have cheated and defrauded: vs.4 and 6 in order to gain. This is not just the sin of the rich; the poor defraud one another and sell their souls for a pittance. They have no rest. God provided especially for the poor in the Sabbath laws. The poor, the animals, the land was to have rest.
 - c. They have fed their souls on food that cannot satisfy. Vs. 5 Isaiah 55:1-3 "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your

ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

B. Vs. 7, 8. The Harvest of the World

1. The words concerning riches are not a call to the rich to repent; they are the decree of God against those who love the world. What they treasure, even if they have little of it, is blasted, because of the unfaithfulness to God. Those who love the world will reap the judgment of the world.
2. Those who are hated by those who love the world are to be patient.
 - a. Stablish your hearts. The real business is done in the heart. If you love the world you will be distressed because the world does not love you, and you will seek the world in order for the world to love you.
 - b. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world the love of the father is not in him.
 - c. Psalm 62: 8 " Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. 9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.
 - d. Phil. 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
 - e. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth: that for which the earth was created. It was not created so that man could wallow in its treasures, but to seek the Lord and seek those things above.

Amen and Amen
God bless you.