

Be Patient in Suffering – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – James exhorts believers to be patient in every way as they wait for the Lord
2. aim – to cause us to demonstrate our faith as a patience in every kind of suffering
3. passage – James 5:7-12

b. outline

1. Patience in Waiting (James 5:7-8)
2. Patience in Relationships (James 5:9)
3. Patience in Steadfastness (James 5:10-11)
4. Patience in Consistency (James 5:12)

c. opening

1. the **final stage** of the letter
 - a. **quote: James 1:2-3** – the opening “bookend” of the letter
 - b. it is from this initial statement that the letter flows out into its two main subjects:
 1. the *essence* of saving faith = not (simply) a profession of belief, but a commitment to Christ that produces visible transformation – to be “doers of the Word, not hearers only” (1:22)
 2. the *substance* of saving faith = the specific transformations that genuine faith produces; transformed speech, a transformed understanding of world (wisdom), a transformed relationship with material things
 - c. **quote: James 5:7a** – the closing “bookend” of the letter
 - d. **IMO:** the author is returning to his original point in order to begin to “wrap things up”
 1. **5:13ff** becomes the *epilogue* of the letter – some final *practical* matters for the dispersed Christians to employ in their churches *flowing out of the view of faith espoused in the letter*
 2. so, **5:7-12** is a “restatement” of the theme that opens the letter = in the midst of a life filled with trials and testings, the true follower of Christ is to “count it all joy”; he is to be “patient” as he endures what is happening to him, considering the **long-term value of his trials**
2. the **final work of faith** in the letter
 - a. James is giving us his *final work of faith in the letter*: **genuine faith is characterized by a strong sense of patience in the believer, willing to wait for the Lord to grant him comfort and willing to accept the sufferings of the present knowing that (eventually) all will be made right**
 1. **IOW: the Christian has an entirely different perspective on life – he has joy!**

I. Patience in Waiting (James 5:7-8)

Content

a. the need for waiting patiently (v. 7a)

1. **rhetoical question:** is there anything *more* we could add to 2020 to make it a “year to remember?”
 - a. pandemic, quarantines, economic disaster, the mainstreaming of cultural leftism, race rioting, a presidential election, the death of a supreme court justice, and **(as a cherry on top)** a hurricane
 - b. **not to mention:** how all of these have, in their own way, eroded the church itself
 1. **e.g.** 51% of pastors foresee a decline in church attendance after pandemic has “subsided” (Barna, churchpulseweekly.com, 9/18/2020)
 - c. **point:** W Christians (**i.e.** we!) are being *bombarded* with circumstances that clearly “shake” our sense of comfort – we are being *lambasted* with realities that can (even) shake our confidence in the sovereignty and providence of God over us as his elect (**IOW: why us, God??**)
 1. or ... is God trying to get our attention in some way, as a nation, or as Christians?
2. **remember:** the *imperative* in **v. 7** is the only imperative so far in the chapter
 - a. **in vv. 1-6**, James warns his readers to be careful (**IMO**) not to fall into the *traps* of hoarding possessions, treating others unjustly, or pursuing indulgent lifestyles (generally true of the rich, but also *possible* for ordinary believers to fall into the trap of worldliness outlined in **4:1-12**)
 - b. so, the imperative here (to be “patient”) implies that the Christians were not *yet* guilty of these things, *but they could be* if they failed to truly be transformed by their faith
 1. **i.e.** they *could* sink into the worldliness of the reprobate **if they failed to take the long view**

b. the goal in waiting patiently (v. 7b)

1. **question:** what is the “long view” that Christians are to take, both in the face of trials and suffering (**see 1:2**) and in the face of the temptation to worldliness and materialism (**see 5:1-6**)?
2. **answer:** it is a matter of **perspective** that the Christian holds *differently* from the reprobate
 - a. **fact:** both the Christian and non-Christian are but a “mist,” granted “*threescore years and ten*” in this life (**James 4:14** cf. **Psa. 90:10 KJV**) – we all have *little time* in this world
 - b. thus, we have only a short window of opportunity to grab for all the pleasures of the senses that we can; to pursue wealth, prosperity, sensualities, happiness, health, power, status, fame, etc.
 - c. the reprobate man *inherently* knows that pleasure now is all there is – the *Imago Dei* within him condemns him in *knowing* that this life is followed only by judgment and wrath
 - d. but ... the regenerate man *has an entirely different perspective* – he can see this life as only the **precursor** to a much greater existence promised in “*the coming of the Lord*”
3. “*the coming of the Lord*” (v. 7b and v. 8) = the **eschaton**; the consummation of the decree of God whereby the risen Christ returns to the physical earth to establish his kingdom
 - a. the establishment of the “*kingdom of heaven*” where all of creation is glorified to its original purpose and the elect enjoy the company of the Triune God in a state of eternal perfection *on a new earth*
 1. **note:** not just “heaven” (**as in:** mansions on golden streets), but a perfected creation ruled by the all-loving Son of God inhabited by immortal creatures able to enjoy it (and him!) forever
 2. **IMO** (gleaned from “Heaven” by Randy Alcorn): the universe, in its perfected state, will become “the playground of the elect” – an eternity to explore the infinite creativity of God as physical creatures, unshackled from the limitations of space and time, and freed from the devastating effects of sin and death (**i.e.** able to *truly take dominion* over all things; **Genesis 1:28**)
 3. a kingdom filled with the glory of Christ Jesus who grants to his people every blessing that flows from his nature as the infinitely loving and infinitely creative Creator
 - b. Jesus and the N.T. writers allude frequently to Christ’s return as the *motivation* for a life of obedience and perseverance (patience) – the **anticipation** of his return (**Matthew 24:43f**)
“But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”
 1. **in fact:** it is *likely* that James believed (in 45AD) that Christ’s return was **imminent**
4. the “*patience*” of the Christian comes from knowing **two inescapable truths**:
 - a. **truth #1:** that we may *not* be blessed by God to enjoy a comfortable and healthy life of pleasure or prosperity in this life – we may be ordained by sovereign decree to experience a life of “poverty”
 1. (**again**) the “poverty” of the W is vast wealth compared to most people (**i.e.** a *perspective*)
 2. but, the long view is to accept that reality in this life knowing that **in the kingdom of heaven we will experience physical blessings beyond anything this world has to offer**
 - a. the reprobate have only this life to enjoy, the elect have all eternity to enjoy
 - b. **truth #2:** that we may be cursed by God to suffer pain, injustice, opposition, persecution, and hatred in this life *for the sake of Christ* – we may be ordained by sovereign decree to experience a life of hostility from the world because we have trusted in the promises of God (**ironically!**)
 1. (**again**) the rising tide of cultural leftism in the W *will* produce unique forms of opposition to a Christian worldview (**i.e.** the belief in moral absolutes, the embrace of the *Imago Dei*, etc.)
 2. but, the long view is to accept that reality in this life knowing that **in the kingdom of heaven we will experience love and acceptance beyond anything this world has to offer**
 - a. the reprobate long for love and justice *now*, the elect have all eternity to know true love
 - c. **those who have a promised existence beyond this life are able to be patient in this life**

c. the example of waiting patiently (v. 7c)

1. (**again**) James uses an illustration *from everyday life* to help cement his point
 - a. **remember:** this was a common teaching technique in the First Century; James *mimics* his half-brother in using this technique to drive home points using common analogies and illustrations
 - b. the illustration of the **patience of a farmer**: the farmer, who plants a crop, needs to patiently wait for it to grow and mature – that patience *takes time* (**i.e.** through the “*early and late*” rains; the rains that would fall just after sowing, and the rains that would come at maturity before harvest)
 1. **e.g.** winter wheat planted in early autumn waits through winter and is harvested in summer
 2. **i.e.** the farmer is *completely at the mercy* of the weather *over a long, anxious time* (6 mos.)
2. like the farmer, the Christian is to wait (persevere) through years of testing in anticipation of the day in which the “harvest” will finally arrive – we can’t “make” it happen sooner, but we can *anticipate* it

d. the point of waiting patiently (v. 8)

1. “establish your hearts” = steel yourself; set yourself on a course; make a plan and stick to it
 - a. “heart” = the control center of a man; that nature within us that determines our course
 1. the heart of the reprobate man is cold and rebellious towards God, therefore it pursues within him selfish goals; it desires *autonomy* and *self-determination* and *self-satisfaction*
 2. the heart of the regenerate man has been born again by the Spirit to a love of God, therefore it pursues within him **divine goals**; it desires relationship with God and submission to Christ and all that implies about the **real meaning of life now**
 - b. the born-again heart within the believer understands that life is about *long-term goals*
 1. **fact**: the pursuit of possessions, power, and indulgence is a *short-term goal* – because life is a mist, the pursuit of such things *in this life* ends quickly (**i.e.** we need them *now*)
 2. the true Christian recognizes this *reality* – the born-again individual desires the *long-term* realities, so he has **joy** in the midst of suffering – he is looking “beyond” the momentary
2. **principle: faith is visible within us by how we treat eternity in relation to this life – faith is a trust in the promises of God that we are willing to wait to receive**
 - a. **as believers, we must establish our hearts to follow Christ through every kind of suffering this world has to offer because we know what awaits us (Phil. 3:17-4:1)**

“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.”