

DAILY DOSE OF JAMES



Week 11 - James 5:7-12

Monday

PATIENCE: BEING ABLE TO ENDURE SUFFERING FOR A LONG STRETCH OF TIME (5:7-8)

We are such a people of comfort and want anything that disrupts our well-being to be removed immediately. "Bring on the good – now!" and make the bad go away just as quickly! James begins this section of his last chapter by urging us to be patient.

One of the definitions of patience is "a willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay." He uses a farmer as an example of waiting. He "waits for the land to yield its valuable crop." The outcome he is waiting for is totally out of his control. Our human tendency in waiting often produces undue anxiety, stress, and insecurity. Waiting and not knowing the outcome can produce doubt and lack of confidence in whom we ultimately blame for our struggles – the omnipotent God who created us and longs to show Himself to us, whose very character and nature is goodness and love! We want to be assured of the reason and the outcome before we can exert patience during it. Likewise, many times even if we are assured of the reason and the outcome, we have difficulty waiting through the time God has ordained before we realize the end blessing!

Reflection Questions

1. How does the illustration of a farmer show the importance of patience?
2. Describe an area where you need to be patient as you wait for God to come through for you. Are there definite steps that you can take to help you endure this time in your life?

Our patience (refusal to become restless and annoyed) should be coupled with our standing steadfast. Why? Because the Lord's coming is near. We will not be waiting forever!

Tuesday – PATIENCE: WITH ONE ANOTHER (5:9)

James takes us from a compelling challenge to be patient to a strong argument as to why we should not complain against one another. James is especially talking about our sufferings at the hands of others. Prolonged difficulties cause us to become frustrated, lose patience, and begin complaining about others. Often times that complaining might not even be through words spoken but can be an internal attitude, shown by our countenance and other mannerisms. It is a bitter and resentful spirit manifesting itself against others.

It is interesting that this verse follows the example of a farmer. A farmer knows that he cannot get into a dispute with his neighbors nor grumble against them. First, he doesn't have the time or energy to get into those kinds of disagreements. Secondly, he needs his neighboring farmers too much to risk putting up a wall in the usually amiable, helpful relationship. The work is too overwhelming and oftentimes can be thrown into emergency situations that need immediate solutions – it is unwise to live in isolation. They can't get along without each other!

The powerful motive for why we should not let this permeate our lives is so that we will not be judged. I Cor. 4:5 says "...He will both bring to light the secret things that are now hidden in darkness and disclose and expose the secret aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his (due) commendation from God"(AMP).

Reflection Questions

1. What can believers do to help one another develop patience and perseverance?
2. Do you have a relationship right now that has been severely damaged by your lack of patience with a fellow believer?
3. What is one step that God is asking you today to take toward mending that relationship?

If you are a believer, you will never again be judged for your sin – Christ has already taken that for you. But we can lose the reward promised us for righteous and obedient actions. Our hope should be to hear from your Lord, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant!*" (Matt.25:21 KJV).

Wednesday – PATIENCE: WHEN SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD (5:10)

Patience takes on many faces. We can strive to be patient when time is an issue, we can strive to be patient when things just aren't going our way, we can even strive to be patient when we are waiting for a decision to be made that directly affects us. The kind of patience referred to in these verses is again dealing with suffering that is caused by other people in our life.

Prophets in the Old Testament suffered evil treatment from people because they spoke in God's name. Israel's prophets endured much persecution, rejection, and abuse. These men and women provide great encouragement to us as examples of being patient in suffering. First of all, they were in the will of God yet still they suffered. All suffering is not the result of our poor choices or actions. Obedience is never promised to only produce ease and pleasure. Secondly, they remind us that God cares for us when we endure suffering in His name. "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you"(unknown). Thirdly, many of their trials and sufferings came not only from unbelievers but at the hands of fellow Christ-followers.

Reflection Questions

1. How does our "suffering for good" bring power to the gospel?
2. How does knowing what life will be like in eternity give us strength to patiently endure the present?

3. Think of a time when you persevered in spirit during difficult circumstances. What were the rewards for your endurance?

The impact of a faithful, godly life that is enduring undeserved suffering carries much power! Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to remember these dear men and women often and receive the challenge to run our race with diligence and faithfulness.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1ESV).

Thursday: PATIENCE: WHEN WE CAN'T SEE GOD'S HAND (5:11)

God allows trials in the midst of our happiness, but blessings come after we have endured great suffering. We cannot persevere until there is a trial that we have to walk through. I Peter 2:20 tells us *"But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God" (NIV).*

Those trials that rock our world and make us stand up and say "But why me?" are the times that give us the most opportunity to just endure...to keep on keeping on! To crank the heat up even more, there are many times when in our greatest suffering, God gives no answer to our cries and His reasons are hidden from our understanding. James then points us to Job, perhaps the greatest example of human suffering that we know. Job had everything taken from him – and God was silent. Job questioned, he cried out, he mourned but he did not forsake his faith in the Lord. *"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him" (Job 13:15 NASB).*

Reflection Questions

1. How was God's compassion and mercy extended to Job?
2. Have you ever responded to personal tragedy by asking "Why me?"
3. What should our attitude be when God delays in answering our prayer? When He remains silent? Are you willing to accept "no" for an answer?

Many have the erroneous idea that if we obey, we will be blessed which translates to wealth and being comfortable. James tells us to look at Job – a righteous man *YET* he *SUFFERED*. God has purposes in suffering higher than we can ever understand. A song by Babbie Mason has the following chorus:

"When you don't understand...
When you don't see His plan...
When you can't trace his hand...
Trust His heart!"

Friday

PATIENCE: SHOWS GOD'S CHARACTER BY HIS ACTIONS AND OUR CHARACTER BY OUR WORDS (5:12)

From our vantage point of seeing Job's life before, during, and at the end of his struggle, we know that God had a very intentional purpose in it all. God's end was to reveal Himself and His character as being full of compassion and tender mercy.

Throughout history, God has gone “over the top” to let us see Him and know Him for who He is. Among many other attributes, knowing that He is just, merciful, full of compassion, good, loving, and an all-knowing God gives us hope and a sure footing when we go through times of suffering. It has been said, “God is too wise to make mistakes. God is too good to be unkind.” When we are certain that a loving God is behind the details of our life, we have great hope and comfort!

Verse 12 seems to be out of context and hard to fit into the realm of suffering. One’s character is known through his moral qualities, ethical standards, principles, and integrity – more often by actions than by words. A true follower of Christ with godly character molded from his experiences, especially his struggles, has only to say yes or no for others to believe you. Words alone are never a manifestation of character unless backed by a pure heart and a life marked by integrity. During your suffering, especially if it is for doing good, speak few words either in defense or explanation. Let God alone avenge His name and His children – your character will prove true in the end.

1. What are some promises that God offers His children in time of suffering?
2. How does your understanding of God encourage you to be patient?
3. What do you hope to gain in godly character by being patient through your time of suffering?

Our willingness to endure seasons of suffering in our lives without complaint, annoyance, or anger is the patience that God calls us to. The prevailing motivation for us should be the certainty that the Lord is coming soon! Our life on earth is but a moment! Our King is coming!