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Lesson 10 — *Real Faith: Real Faith Evidences Patience (5:7-12)*

## INTRODUCTION

“In verses 7-11 [James] shifts his focus from the persecutors to the persecuted, moving from condemning the faithless, abusive rich to comforting the faithful, abused poor.”<sup>1</sup> In contrast with the self-indulgent worldliness of the wealthy and in light of the oppression that Christians may face, true believers evidence patience.

- Patience = 4x
- Waits = 1x
- Steadfast = 2x

Patience refers to the “state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome.”<sup>2</sup> These Christians were under pressure, being used and abused (5:1-6), and yet they had the capacity in Christ to have tranquil spirits. Clearly, then, this is a uniquely Christian virtue!

We likely all deal with this universal human struggle to wait. We are born with it, we watch it in our children, and in them we see a mirror of ourselves. And yet, in such a virtue is a demonstration of humility that brings the grace of God (4:6).

Scripture speaks much about such godly, patient waiting.

- Psalm 25:5 — Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.
- Psalm 27:14 — Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!
- Psalm 31:24 — Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!

- Psalm 33:20 — Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.
- Psalm 37:7, 9, 34 — Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! ... For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. ... Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.
- Psalm 38:15 — But for you, O Lord, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.
- Psalm 39:7 — And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.
- Psalm 40:1 — I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.
- Psalm 62:1, 5 — For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. ... For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.
- Psalm 69:3 — I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.
- Psalm 130:5, 6 — I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.
- Proverbs 20:22 — Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.
- Isaiah 8:17 — I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.
- Isaiah 25:9 — It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”
- Isaiah 26:8 — In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.

- Isaiah 30:18 — Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.
- Isaiah 33:2 — O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.
- Isaiah 40:31 — But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
- Isaiah 49:23 — Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.
- Isaiah 64:4 — From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.
- Lamentations 3:25, 26 — The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
- Hosea 12:6 — So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.
- Micah 7:7 — But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.
- Luke 2:38 — And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.
- Romans 8:19 — For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
- Titus 2:13 — Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.
- 2 Peter 3:12 — Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

- Jude 21 — Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

In our text, the driving exhortation is discovered in verse 7, “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.” Such patience takes at least four forms.

### **BE EXPECTANT IN YOUR LABOR (vv. 7-8).**

*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

For the Christian, patient waiting on the Lord is expectant waiting on the Lord.

#### **1. Illustration: a farmer**

- “Waits for” = “to remain in a place or state and await an event or the arrival of someone, *expect, wait*”<sup>3</sup>
- the expectancy of harvest (“precious fruit”)
- It is patience that takes him from sowing to seeing to harvesting.

#### **2. Explanation**

- So, like the farmer, James says, “You also, be patient” (v. 8).
- Furthermore, this expectancy should take root somewhere—in our hearts. James tells us to “establish your hearts.” This means “to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, *confirm, establish, strengthen*.”<sup>4</sup>
- God wants to engage our hearts in this fruit of patience. He wants to settle our hearts, for there is much that can shake them.
- But, as for the farmer, so it is true for the Christian—the future holds a harvest (3:18)!

### 3. Motivation: the coming of the Lord

- Like the farmer, our motivation is future. It is our hope that “the coming of the Lord is at hand” that should cause us to be expectant in our patient waiting and working.
  - The Lord’s future coming reminds us that even now He is able to “rend the heavens and come down” (Isaiah 64:1).
  - Additionally, the Lords’ future coming compels us to live in such a way that we do “not shrink from him in shame at his coming” (1 John 2:28).
  - Furthermore, it is at the Lord’s future coming that our ultimate harvest is reaped!

#### **BE FORBEARING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS (vv. 9-10).**

*Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

The word “patient” in this paragraph “is a different word from the one translated ‘endurance’ in James 1:3-4. That word, *hupomonē*, refers to patiently enduring trying circumstances; *makrothumēō* [lit. ‘long’ = ‘anger’ or ‘long-tempered’] refers to patiently enduring difficult people (cf. Matt. 18:26, 29; 1 Thess. 5:14).”<sup>5</sup>

Experience teaches us that when we are under pressure, we often end up turning on people. Instead, we ought to be leaning on each other (cf. 5:13ff). Additionally, people can sometimes be the cause of pressure or make a difficult situation worse, and yet we must not turn away from each other. We must be forbearing.

#### 1. Explanation

- We must beware “grumbling” “against one another.” To “grumble” means to complain or be discontent; to criticize, condemn, judge, disparage, etc. (cf. 4:11-12).
- Remember, brothers and sisters, we “belong to each other” (Romans 12:5) and “are members one of another”

(Ephesians 4:25). Therefore, let us not be a house divided against itself (Mark 3:25)!

### 2. Illustration: the prophets

- Consider how forbearing they were in 1 Corinthians-like love (vv. 7), even when facing “suffering” at the hands of those they served.
- Example: Moses (Exodus 32:30-32), Samuel (1 Samuel 8:4-7; 12:23), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7-13)
- These prophets denied their rights and rightness and were used and abused by those they served, and yet they lovingly and patiently put up with people.

### 3. Motivation: the judgment of the Lord

- James’ warning against grumbling is so that we “may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”
- Resisting each other is an act of resistance against God!

#### **BE STEADFAST IN YOUR FAITHFULNESS (v. 11).**

*Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

As Jesus taught us in the beatitudes, “Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast” (cf. Matthew 5:10-11; Luke 6:22-23).

#### 1. Explanation

- “Steadfastness” = “to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, *stand one’s ground, hold out, endure.*”<sup>6</sup>
- Our commitment to “hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:1) is severely tested in pressure. But “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2; cf. Matthew 23:13; Hebrews 6:1-9).
- God is often the first one we blame in pressure. Like an animal, we only show loyalty to God when we’re getting

treats (Psalm 73:21-23). We overlook the never-ending gift of the new birth (cf. James 1:17-18).

- Such a selfish perspective is wrong! We must hold faith in Christ even in affliction. Why? Because we “have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:1-4). He did...for you! He was steadfast in His faithfulness for you; so you can and must be for Him!

## 2. Illustration: Job

- “the steadfastness of Job” — He was not perfect in faithfulness, but he was steadfast.

## 3. Motivation: the grace of the Lord

### a. God has a purpose.

- This word (Gk. *telos*) has two possible meanings:
  - It refers to a goal or process (cf. Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 5:10).
  - It refers to an end (cf. Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17).

### b. God is patient: compassionate and merciful.

- The cross proves that God is a suffering and sympathetic God.
  - “Compassionate” = “pert. to a very high degree of affection and compassion for someone, *sympathetic, compassionate*”<sup>7</sup>
  - “Merciful” = “pert. to being concerned about another’s unfortunate state or misery”<sup>8</sup>

## **BE HONEST IN YOUR SPEECH (v. 12).**

*But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

Possible connections with verses 7-11 and verse 12:

- Pressure can provoke loose or rash speech (cf. 3:8).
- We might make a (unreal) vow to God to get out of the pressure.
- Pressure can cause us to lose a grip on truth/reality.

Jesus addressed this theme in Matthew 5:33-37 and 23:16-22. At the very least, James is stressing that we need to be honest and genuine, expressing integrity in our speech (a key theme of his), even in the midst of pressure and victimization:

*For those who truly demonstrate the persistence and patience prescribed for believers, there is no need to invoke an oath, whether by heaven or by earth, that their word is certain [Illustration: in the vernacular, “I’m not going to lie to you”]. (“Swear” does not refer to profanity but to taking an oath.) The testimony should be such that when one says yes, it means yes, and when he says no, that is just what he means (cf. Matt. 5:37). The soon return of the Lord, the Judge who stands at the door (James 5:9), is motivation enough for this kind of honesty and trustworthiness, lest one be condemned (lit., “fall under judgment”).<sup>9</sup>*

As Christians, we are the truth-people. We are the “pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), and follow the One who declared Himself to be “the Truth” (John 14:16).

## CONCLUSION

In our patience under pressure, brothers and sisters, let us:

- Be expectant in our labor.
- Be forbearing in our relationships.
- Be steadfast in our faithfulness.
- Be honest in our speech.

In this way, we will both authenticate and adorn our real faith.

Yes, “be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord”!

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *James*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 251.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 612.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 945.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, 253.

<sup>6</sup> Arndt, 1039.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 850.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 700.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ronald Blue, “James,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 833–834.