Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How to Face Trials Patiently
Scripture: James 5:7-11
Code: 59-31

Let's turn to James chapter 5 and we're going to look at verses 7 to 11, talking about the subject, "How to face trials patiently." Now we don't need to be reminded that we all have trials, that's fairly routine. None of us escapes that. But we do need to be reminded from time to time about the need to be patient. And you will notice verse 7 of this text in James 5, "Be patient therefore, brethren," and that's really what it's all about all the way down through verse 11. It's a section about being patient in the midst of trials. Obviously, the group to whom James was writing, Jews converted to Christ and naming His name in an assembly we don't exactly know where they were located, but these wonderful believers in Christ who were scattered abroad, representative of the twelve tribes as chapter 1 verse 1 says, were facing trials. They were facing temptations and afflictions and persecutions and so forth and they needed to be patient. They needed to learn patience.

I was reminded of Job and James mentions Job in verse 11, we'll get to that a little later. Job knew better than most people what it was to suffer and Job in the fifth chapter and the seventh verse said, "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." In other words, as surely as sparks off a fire go up not down, so man will have trouble. Jesus said, John 16:33, "In this world you shall have trouble," or tribulation. Paul in teaching new Christians in Galatia warned that, "We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. And he also talked to the Roman believers about the sufferings of this present time, chapter 8 and verse 18. And he expressed frankly in that same eighth chapter that the whole creation was subject to vanity in the bondage of corruption, groaning and travailing in pain. I mean, it goes with the created order of the universe that there's trouble. And all of us who live here experience that trouble in one way or another. And there's really no relief. All the books and seminars and all of the lessons and sermons and teachings and all of the counselors and psychologists, none of them together or separately can alleviate trouble. It cannot be eliminated in this world, it's just part of it, everything from a flat tire on the freeway to the death of a mate, and everything in between and everything conceivable hits our lives. That is the reflection of the curse. That's a reflection of the fallenness of this world, the fact that the curse of God exists in the world because of sin.

But for Christians there is the unique kind of trouble that non-Christians don't have, and that's the trouble of persecution for the truth. We are persecuted for the sake of Christ. That is a trouble, a kind of tribulation suffering that the rest of the world doesn't have to endure. We have to endure the rejection of a hostile society who rejects the gospel.

In the New Testament then the persecuted suffering church is a recurring theme. And James has been writing about how the wicked wealthy, for example, abuse the righteous poor. Back in verses 1 to 6 you remember he discussed the wicked wealthy, and then finally in verse 6 he says you have condemned and killed the righteous, meaning the righteous poor. And those righteous poor who belong to God and Christ have been persecuted by the wicked wealthy as well as by others as well. And the righteous do not resist, he says in verse 6, the righteous do not retaliate, they do not fight back out of vengeance. They meekly are content to suffer for Christ and let vengeance belong to God. They maintain the spirit of gentleness and meekness, the Spirit of Christ who when He was reviled, Peter said, reviled not again...when He was persecuted did not lash out. And so, like our Lord Jesus Christ, we accept suffering in quietness, expecting that that is an inevitable response to the gospel.

In our morning study this morning in 2 Timothy we were reminded again of the same truth. Paul saying to Timothy, this is to be expected, don't be ashamed of the Lord or of me His prisoner, but suffer along with us. It goes with the territory.

And certainly the Jews to whom James was writing specifically were experiencing the trouble of persecution coming from their own countrymen which made it doubly difficult to bear. So in verses 1 to 6 James condemns the persecuting wicked wealthy and in verses 7 to 11 he talks to those being persecuted and tells them what kind of attitude they are to have. It's a very practical section. He goes from condemning the faithless rich to encouraging the faithful poor. He goes from condemning those who are the persecutors to comforting those who are the persecuted.

And in verses 7 to 11 we find the instruction basically that we're to be patient. The Holy Spirit is well aware that there are trials and there is suffering and there is persecution but nonetheless we are to be patient. It is very possible that believers, those that are just as they're called in verse 6, or righteous, it's the same word, that is they're right with God, they belong to Him, can definitely react wrongly to persecution. As the Apostle Paul who yelled at the high priest, "God smite you, you whited wall," in Acts, he retaliated in an angry ungodly fashion, we can have an ungodly response to persecutions and trials as well. In fact, we could even go so far as to blame God, become irritated with Him and transfer some of our frustrations to our own Christian brothers and sisters. We could become so irritated and so hostile that we sort of lash out against everybody. There are Christians who when they are put into the crucible of suffering become impossible for anyone to stand. And James knows that.

So here is a passage calling for patience. Let me read it to you, verses 7 to 11, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord, behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord draws near. Grumble not one against another, brethren, lest you be

judged. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold we count them happy who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

That's a great passage and it is so practical and so direct in instructing us how to be patient. And I trust the Spirit of God will teach us together.

Let's look at that word "patient" for a moment. Basically it has the idea of being long suffering with people. There is a word hupomonewhich was used in chapter 1 and translated "trials or temptations," and that means to be able to endure adverse circumstances. This word has to do with enduring adverse people. The first word, hupomonehas to do with the ability to be patient in circumstances, this one be patient with people. It is linked to the oppression from the wicked wealthy that is mentioned in verse 6. Patience with people is just as important as patience in circumstances.

Since righteous and just people don't fight back, as verse 6 says, since they don't resist and retaliate and seek vengeance, then you must not do that. Whatever the trial, whatever the persecution, you must be patient. That's the righteous standard. That's the righteous expectation of the child of God.

Now I believe this is directed at those who can be patient. Therefore it is directed at those who are believers. We could say it's another test of living faith and that James is saying if you're not patient under a trial, it may be that you're not a true Christian. And that's possible. It is possible that one could claim to be a Christian but given enough difficulty would show that they were not a Christian at all because they were filled with unending vengeance. But I think the main thrust here is to believers who have the capacity to be patient and are in this case the brethren who are true brethren...Christians who need to stay righteous and stay just in the midst of their persecution and their suffering. And it's not easy.

When you're on the job or at school and somebody finds out you're a Christian and harasses you in regard to that, it's not easy to restrain a retaliation. It may well be that you've lost your job over a testimony and it's not very easy for you to not have bitter thoughts against your persecutor. And so this can be very practical. James says be patient. The word makrothumeo, very interesting. Have you ever heard the word macro? It means large. And the word thumosmeans anger. Makrosmeans in the simplest sense "long." We use it for large, something that is macro is large. The Greeks had in mind something particularly long. And what it means is long tempered. That's exactly what it means as opposed to...what?...short tempered. Be long tempered, have a long fuse, not a short one. And as I said, it's not the same as the word for trials used in chapter 1 verses 3, 4 and 12, the word hupomone, that word has to do with the idea of enduring circumstances, this has to do with being long tempered or long suffering or very patient with people. Patience is enduring someone who is mistreating you and not being angry and not being full of vengeance. It is being slow to anger. It

speaks of that in Proverbs 15:18, Proverbs 16:32, and we know that even God is slow to anger. The Old Testament says, and I must have found a dozen passages the other day where it says, "God is slow to anger, full of compassion." And we're to have the character of God...the character of Christ who in meekness and gentleness did not retaliate against those who falsely accused and persecuted Him.

We can be thankful God is patient. We can be thankful God is long suffering. We can be thankful He has a long fuse and He's long tempered because as Peter says in 2 Peter 3:15, "The long suffering, the makrothumeoof God is salvation." If God had a short fuse, folks, guess where we'd all be. Not hard to imagine. We'd be in hell. But He is long suffering, long tempered, very patient. And if a holy God can be patient with unholy sinners, then unholy sinners can certainly be patient until a holy God acts in their behalf. Understood? Pretty basic. And if we believe, as the Bible says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," Romans 10, Hebrews 10:30, then we can commit it to Him.

So as James called for true believers to exhibit hupomone, endurance in trials, in circumstances in chapter 1, he now comes back to that subject in the last chapter and adds, "Also be patient with people." Endure not only trying and difficult circumstances but trying and difficult people. In fact, this again is a mark of true spirituality.

Now the question comes, that's fine, the exhortation, be patient therefore, brethren, that's fine, but how? Let me give you six keys, okay? Six practical keys to being patient during trials with people.

Number one, this makes sense, anticipate the Lord's coming. Anticipate the Lord's coming. What does that say? Realize it won't always be like this. Do you ever think like that? O Lord, sometimes you think like that more than others...get me back...or get me out of heaven...out of earth into heaven...a little tongue-tied. Lord, get me into heaven and get me into heaven quickly. Sometimes we long to go to heaven. And frankly with some of us it may be because of an overwhelming love for Christ but I tend to think that for must of us, heaven is dearer to us the more we suffer in this world. It's the pain that causes that anticipation. So he says in verse 7, just drops that, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord."

By the way, he mentions the coming of the Lord in verse 8, mentions the coming of the Lord again in verse 9 as he says the Judge is standing before the gates, literally, plural word for gates. So three times he says the Lord is coming...three references to the Second Coming of Christ. And the church has always lived in the hope of the Second Coming, haven't we? Always. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ, we are anticipating His soon return. We live in the light of that return. That's just the way it is with us. We know we're not going to be here forever, we know we're going to a better land, a better place, a city whose builder and maker is God. And we live in the light of the Second Coming.

And may I suggest to you also that a persecuted church lives even more in the light of the Second Coming. In fact the more persecuted a church is, the more it anticipates the Second Coming. And on the other side, the affluent self-serving worldly indulgent church of today is really little concerned about the Second Coming. They're more concerned about the postponing of the Second Coming until they can get their next goody. But a church under persecution inevitably longs for the coming of Christ.

And I want you to notice that word "coming." That is the word parousiaand I mention the Greek word for you because it is such a constantly repeated word in the New Testament. It is the most common term in the New Testament epistles for the Second Coming, the parousia. You'll hear theologians use that word, you'll even read it sometimes, the parousia, it means more than the coming in the Greek...let me see if I can give you the idea of it, it means the best word that I can identify is the arrival because it's not just the coming, it is the coming and the presence. So it is that Jesus comes and He is present. That perhaps can be condensed into the word "arrival." We're looking for the arrival of Jesus Christ. His coming in order to bless His people with His presence. That's the idea of the word, one who is coming to give to those who receive Him His presence. It's His arrival we're looking for. It's not enough to live in this world, it's not enough to have the best that this world has to offer because the Bible says if in this world only you have hope, you're of all men most miserable, it is enough to know there is another world to come, a perfect world into which we are ushered when Jesus Christ arrives.

And James doesn't go into any discussion here. He doesn't give us an eschatological chart. He doesn't give us eight paragraphs on the crescendo of human history. He doesn't give us any kind of insight into specifics. He just in a general way without explanation and without discussion says, "Brethren, be patient unto the coming of the Lord." In other words, if you're going to endure the persecution of the wicked wealthy, tied in by the word "therefore," if you're going to endure whatever suffering comes, you've got to have your eyes on the return and the arrival of Jesus Christ. It's a familiar hope, it's the hope of the church, it always has been, it always will be until the Lord comes. You might be interested to know that one out of every thirteen verses in the New Testament makes a reference to the Second Coming and the arrival of Jesus Christ. It's major New Testament teaching.

And Jesus Himself had so much to say about His Second Coming. You read the gospels and you remember that Jesus taught that His coming would be preceded by signs and would when it happened be as vivid and visible and unmistakable as lightning which would illuminate the whole sky. He said it would happen in a day which cannot be known in advance. He said it would be a separating time. There would be the righteous separated from the unrighteous. He said those who were Christ's would be gathered to His presence. The Scripture goes on and talks about the Rapture of the church and the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the kingdom. There's so many references to the Second Coming of Christ. By the way, starting in the fall on Sunday nights we're going to begin a verse by verse study of the book of Revelation and we're going to learn everything

there is to learn about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I think the Lord would have us do that so we can disattach ourselves a little bit from this world that's got its claws so deeply into us.

The church then is always on the watch, but first we have to finish 1 Peter, you'll allow me to do that. The church is always on the watch. The church lives in the light of the coming of Christ, 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is near," so Peter says be sober therefore, sober minded, and watch prayerfully, watch. We're watching for the coming of Christ. It must be the focus of a Christian who is in tribulation, a Christian who is in trouble, a Christian who is suffering to look to the coming of Christ. How about Romans 8:18, "I reckon, or I consider, I reason that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Whatever we suffer here isn't worthy to even be compared with what is ahead when the Lord Jesus comes. And that is such a marvelous and hopeful promise.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, "For our light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Whatever light affliction we endure here pales beside the glory which awaits us in the future. And in that last chapter of 2 Timothy verse 5 chapter 4, watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry, Paul then says, "For I am ready to be offered, the time of my departure is at hand, I fought a good fight, finished my course, kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." We live in the light of His appearing. We live to see Him. That's our hope in suffering.

Whatever you might endure in this life get your eyes off that and on to the Second Coming of Christ. John writes in 1 John 3:3, "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself." If you live in the light of the Second Coming, it purifies you. Peter said the same thing in 2 Peter chapter 3, "When we know all these things shall come to pass, what manner of persons ought we to be?" And then he says, "Holy persons living godly lives, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." So we can remember as the psalmist said that joy comes in the mourning. That's a wonderful thing to realize.

Now go back to James for a moment, that fifth chapter, just a couple of things further in this verse. "Be patient therefore unto the coming of the Lord." And then this illustration, "Behold," that's to get their attention, to have them listen carefully, this is an analogy and he wants them to understand it, "The farmer, one who tills the soil, a tenant farmer or a land owner, waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience, has makrothumeo, has patient endurance for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain." Now that's just an analogy. It's just a simple illustration. It's not an allegory, it's not to be spiritualized, it's very simple. The farmer waits, that's how it is if you're a farmer, you plant and then you wait. And that conveys the idea of looking expectantly for something outside oneself...that's the Greek term. He looks for that crop to come in. The harvest frankly depends on the providence of God. It depends on God bringing together all of the right components to make the

crop good. And what's he waiting for? Look at it, the precious fruit of the earth. Precious means valuable. It's valuable to him. He depends on it for his existence. It may well be that if he's a small farmer and it's precious to him, that's a good indication that that's all he had. And it may well be also that the few weeks before the crop comes in he's down to his last rations and he may be almost fasting, waiting for that crop to come in. It's very precious fruit of the earth to him. And as he waits he has makrothumeo, he has long patience...long patience it says for it or about it or over it...you could translate that any way you want it but he's talking about the crop. He has long patience until it comes in.

How long is his patience? He waits through the former and the latter rain, or the early and the latter rain. Now in Israel the rain comes twice. You plant in the fall and the rain comes in the season of planting in October and November, that's the early rain. And then you get sporadic rain through December and January and into February but then the latter rain comes in March and April, right before the harvest. And so you have to wait, and this is what James is saying, from the early rain when you plant, October, to the latter rain when you harvest in April, you have to be patient. Not like the little child who plants the seed one day and runs to the garden the next day and sticks his grubby little hand into the dirt and pulls it out to see if it's growing and thereby kills it. The farmer is not like that. The farmer plants and waits. There's no allegory here, just a simple illustration, you have to wait. He's coming and like a farmer who patiently waits for his crop and waits from the early rain of October to eight months later and the late rain of April or so, so you must wait. And as he is patient until the seasons pass and the crop grows to maturity, so must you be patient to do the same. And as the farmer waits for precious fruit, so do you...a precious reward...a precious reward.

In Galatians that wonderful statement in chapter 6, I believe, about verse 9, "And let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Expresses the same idea, be patient, and when the season for harvest comes, you'll enjoy the harvest.

So, verse 7, look at it, be patient. Then an illustration of the farmer. Then verse 8 he repeats the exhortation, "Be ye also patient," just like the farmer was. It's pretty clear, very simple. It's very possible that these people in the churches or the church to which James was writing were impatient. Very possible that they were sort of like the people of Revelation 6:9 to 11 who were under the altar crying, "How long...how long...how long, O Lord, before You come and save Your people and judge the ungodly?" And there will always be those people like 2 Peter 3:3 who say, "Where is the sign of His coming, all things continue as they were." The scoffers and the mockers who say He hasn't come, He never will...which is like saying I'll never die, I never have. And then he says, "Now be patient, and here's how, establish your hearts." That's a strong word, that same word, sterizote(?) is used in Luke 9:51 and it says Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem. It's a word of resoluteness. Be resolute. Set your track. Establish your heart. It's an attitude of firm courage. It's an attitude of commitment that no matter what the trial I confidently move ahead. The root of that word, by the way, is very interesting. The root of the word is to...is really a prop, a prop. And it means to prop yourself

up. He says when you're about to collapse under persecution, prop yourself up with the hope of the Second Coming and be patient. Prop yourself up, stiffen your backbone, stand up straight. That's...that's an exhortation to us to do that...to establish our hearts...to prop ourselves up in anticipation of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Scriptures, I was thinking of this as a footnote, in the Scriptures in several places it talks about the fact that this is the Word of God, the work of God, I mean, that God through His Holy Spirit strengthens the heart...the Spirit strengthens the inner man. First Thessalonians 3:13 essentially says the same thing and there are other places...1 Peter 5:10, "The Lord strengthen and establish you." But it isn't just the Lord as is in all areas of Christian living, the Lord is the one who gets the credit but we have to make the commitment, right?, and that tension, that wonderful tension between the absolute sovereign holy work of God and our response, and so the Holy Spirit is establishing the heart and we willingly are committing to that work of the Spirit. Set your heart firmly down.

James does not tolerate unstable people. Have you noticed that? He really doesn't. Back in chapter 1 he says, "Don't ask in faith wavering." In fact he says, "If a person asks in faith, nothing should waver for the one who wavers is like the wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." And over in chapter 2 verse 4 he talks about people who are partial. In other words, they equivocate in terms of the truth. Again they're unstable. Chapter 3 verse 11, "Fountains that bring forth sweet water and bitter and trees that bear two kinds of fruit which are impossible." Chapter 4 verse 4, "People who love the world and try to love God." And then in verse 8 he says, "Cleanse your hearts, you double-minded." So James at least four or five times in here talks to the issue of a settled heart, of an established heart, of a resolute heart, of a real commitment. That's what he's after. So he says commit yourself to take your firm solid stand that Jesus is coming and be patient, it won't always be like this.

Well you say, "How soon?" And that's the end of verse 8, "With the coming of the Lord...what?, what does it say?...draws near." Literally, "Has come near," is at hand. It's a perfect tense verb and the idea is it's right on the edge, it's just about to happen. This is what we call the doctrine of imminency that the return of Christ is the next event and he could come at any moment. Somebody asked me years ago, "What has to happen in the prophetic scheme before Christ can come." I said, "Only one thing and that's the trump of God and the voice of the archangel and when that happens He's here." Nothing prophetically particularly has to take place in this time in which we live. Jesus could come for His church any moment. He is near at hand. He is near at hand.

I read one author this week who said obviously they were mistaken because He didn't come. No, He's near at hand. He didn't come. You say, "But it's been 2,000 years." For you it's been 2,000 years, for Him it hasn't been time at all because He knows no time and He's been at the door all the time." You remember what Peter said, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand

years as a..." it's been a couple of days for Him by Peter's calculation. He's near. And He's always been near. Ever since the first coming, the second coming has been imminent. In what sense do we mean that? That it's the next

event on God's clock. It's the next event.

In Romans 13:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." And Hebrews 10, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is and much the more as you see the day is approaching." First Peter 4:7, "The Lord is at hand." First John 2:18, "My little children, it is the last time." You see every Christian has lived since the time of Christ in the light of the fact that Christ could come at any moment. And in Revelation, "Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every man according to his work shall be," that was said to all of us. Jesus when He went away in John 14 said, "I go away to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again to receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also," and He promised His coming. He promised His coming. He said, "Nobody knows when it will be so be ready all the time...all the time." We should live in the constant expectation of the coming of Christ. That's what the doctrine of imminency means. All of us, according to Titus 2:13 are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us. We've all lived looking for Christ. He could come at any moment. He could come in a split second.

They weren't wrong. He could have come at any moment. He could have come in their life time. He can come in our life time. He can come this day, this week. And that's the way He left it. Why? Because that kind of expectation has an impact on our life. The clearest illustration of that is just to...looking back in my mind when I was a child, I will never forget I was an elementary school student and I was a pretty rambunctious kid. And the teacher left the room on one occasion. She left the room on a lot of occasions but this one was special. And I decided to do my thing. And so I was making jokes and we were having a little fun and I decided to jump from desk to desk, I was in the second grade...very vivid memory in a little school in Rocklage outside of Philadelphia. And I was jumping from desk to desk and the kids were loving it and I was loving it, you know. I mean, I was showing off to beat the band. But unbeknownst to me those orthopedic wedges had approached the door. They were those squishy kind you can't hear, you know. And the teacher walked in the room as I was in the air between two rows. Imminency... She came in an unexpected moment. And my parents were called to deal with me.

That's...that's the essence of what it means. If I had expected her to come at that moment, I think I would have changed my behavior...I know I would have changed my behavior. And my father made sure I knew I would have changed my behavior.

But the point is this, that when you realize and when you live in the light of the fact that Jesus could come at any moment, you want to be sure that when He comes you're found doing something that

you want to be found doing. It purifies your life. I don't want to be someplace or be doing something or saying something or acting in a way that would be a dishonor to Christ when He comes. I want to be sure all is right and all is well, that's the Christian hope. First Thessalonians 4:13 to 18 describes the Rapture of the church when Jesus calls us to His presence. That could happen any moment. And James says if you want to be able to endure suffering, just live in the light of that. Maybe He'll come in the next moment. Maybe He'll come in the next moment.

You say, "But why does He delay His coming? Why hasn't He already come?" Because He's populating heaven with the elect, because what Paul calls the fullness of the Gentiles has not come in, because He is still redeeming those chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. And it is grace, saving grace, which will be put on display forever and ever throughout the eons of eternity that is keeping Him from coming. But one day He will come and we who live in the light of that live in the light of that filled with hope in the midst of any suffering. And as I said to you at the outset I say to you again, the more the church is persecuted the more it lives in the light of the hope of the Second Coming and thus the more it purifies itself. The more the church is affluent, self-satisfied and indulgent the less concerned it is with the coming of Christ. The more it preoccupies itself with self-esteem gospels and self-aggrandizement and self-help kind of stuff, it isn't even interested in the coming of Christ and therefore the less pure it is. And we want to learn to live in the light of His coming.

Secondly, that's a positive thing that's why Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "Comfort one another with these words." Here's a negative side to that. Verse 9, this is very interesting, all of a sudden he says, "Grumble not one against another, brothers, lest you be judged. Behold, the Judge stands before the gates."

In those days there apparently was a judgment hall that had great double gates or double doors. And the judge would come through those doors and court was in session. And picking out some kind of vernacular, some kind of concept that they understood, he pictures Christ about to push the doors open to walk into the judgment hall to begin the judgment. And so he's saying there's a negative side to this, not only are we looking for the coming of Christ but we're recognizing the Lord's judgment. That's very helpful too...very helpful. That's really what I experienced that day as a second grader, judgment. James is warning that when the Lord comes that's a time for judgment, that's a time to evaluate your service, that's the time for the great bemajudgment when you will be rewarded, when your useless things will be burned up. When if you have sinned and you have forfeited reward, as John says in 2 John 8, you will lose your reward, lose the things that you've already wrought. You will have received a reward and it will be taken away. It will be put in the books to be rewarded and that will be taken out of the books. You can forfeit by sin what you once earned and would have received.

So James here is saying not only do you hopefully anticipate the coming of the Lord but you recognize that when He comes it's judgment time. And so he warns them not to murmur. Why?

Because living under persecution can create all kinds of frustration. And that frustration and hostility if it can't break out toward the persecutor inevitably makes the person bitter and that bitter person begins to break out against the people around them. I mean, you all know, don't you, that frustrated people are not fun for anybody? I don't care who it is, even if you're not the cause of the frustration. And the idea is that people living in difficulty can become so frustrated and so embittered that they lose patience not only with the persecutor but with everybody else around them who is trying to help them, maybe trying to comfort them. And the frustration gets misplaced and it is possible too for them to get so frustrated and bitter that they begin to grumble and murmur and bellyache because somebody's not having it as bad as they are. The word "murmur," by the way, means "to groan or grumble silently." It is a feeling which is internal and unexpressed. It is used in Romans 8:23 and a related one is used in 8:26 where it says, "The Spirit makes groanings for us which cannot be uttered." It's talking about a bitter heart, a resentful spirit that will be demonstrated in relations against each other. So he says don't fall into this sin. And this is a sample sin among many possible sins.

As you look for the Lord's coming, remember it's not only positive in the fact that you can look for a better day...it's negative in the sense that you better be ready that...to face that day so that you will not lose your reward. Because look what he says in verse 9, "Lest you be judged...lest you be judged." And here we could say that if he had in mind those who were fake Christians, this could refer to their final eternal judgment. But even believers will be judged. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the Apostle Paul says. We must all be there to answer for the deeds done in the body whether they are good or bad, 2 Corinthians 5. First Corinthians 3 says that our works will be made manifest whether they are gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble. That in chapter 4 verse 5 our hearts will be manifest, the secrets of our hearts, before we will receive a reward from God. So there's coming a time of reward. There's coming a time to receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give to all those who love Him. And when will He give it? At His appearing. And I quoted it a moment ago, "I come quickly, My reward is with Me." That's why we believe that when the Lord raptures the church, immediately reward time takes place. When He comes, at His appearing, He will grant the crowns, the eternal life, the rewards.

So we could say, based on that, also you might want to add Romans 14, I think it's verse 10...yes, "We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ." You might want to note in your mind that as near as the Second Coming, as near as the Rapture, as near as the parousia, as near as the appearing of Jesus, so near is the bemajudgment. It happens at His appearing. It happens at His coming for us. So it will not only be a time of hope, but it will be a time of judgment.

And then he makes it vivid at the end of verse 9 and says, "Behold," and again he calls for their attention as he did in verse 7, "Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates," or the doors, picturing Christ about ready to burst into the judgment scene.

Now how you going to be patient in your trials? One, you're going to remember that Christ is coming and that He's going to reward you and bless you and take you to heaven...no more sorrow, no more trouble, no more crying, no more death, no more pain, no more tears. But on the other hand, you're going to be patient because you don't want to sin. And the Lord has allowed this trouble to come and you don't want to let that trouble lead you to sin because if you do you may forfeit your reward when the judgment comes. So positively you look at the coming of Christ, negatively you look at the judgment. You might say then there are two emotions...one is hope and one is fear...that help us be patient. "Lord, help me to be patient until I can enter into glory. Lord, help me to be patient so I don't lose my reward."

Thirdly, and we have to hurry, we're missing so many things in my heart to say but time is dominant. Thirdly, follow the Lord's servants. Not only anticipate the Lord's coming and recognize the Lord's judgment, but thirdly, follow the Lord's servants. This is beautiful, verse 10, just wonderful. "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

You need an example? You're going to through the suffering, you need somebody to look at as a model? Then take as an example the prophets. By the way, example is the first word in that Greek verse...amazing it finds its way almost to the end in English...but the verse really begins, "As an example, take, brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord." They're our example. Jesus said in John 13:15, "I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." That's what an example is, do what I did. Imitate the conduct of the prophets, he says, they suffered and they were patient. My brothers, those of you who belong to the community of faith, follow their pattern.

The prophets, who were the prophets? Those who spoke the Word of God. And, no doubt, James is looking back to the prophets of old. Some say, "Well maybe he's including New Testament prophets also." There were New Testament prophets, that's possible. But I think in terms of the heritage of the Jew he is identifying the great prophets of the Old Testament time, probably on up through John the Baptist. Those who have spoken in the name of the Lord...not necessarily those who are now speaking, but looking back to the great prophets who suffered. And there's not really any indication of specific suffering of any New Testament prophets that everybody would know about, but certainly they would the Old Testament ones.

Notice he says "prophets." Those who speak. And then he says, "What they speak they have spoken in the name of the Lord." What does that mean? The name of the Lord is all that He is and all that He has done and all that He wills. And so they have spoken all that God is, all that God has done, and all that God wills for man. They've spoken the Word of God. Look at them. They are examples, classic examples of suffering affliction and of patience at the same time. They have

suffered evil. Pathia(?) is the word "to suffer," pathos, pathetic. And then the word "evil" is attached to make a compound word. They've suffered evil...evil treatment and they did it with patience, makrothemiaagain, they were long-tempered, they were patient with people. They faced great difficulty, they faced great hostility, they faced tremendous rejection. Do you remember what Jesus said in behalf of the prophets in Matthew 22 and verse 37? He's talking...I'm sorry, chapter 23 and verse 37, He's talking to Jerusalem, He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee." What an indictment of Jerusalem. Back in verse 30 of the same chapter, Jesus berates the Pharisees who have been partakers in the blood of the prophets. Jesus even gives parables, parables about, you remember, the parable of the vineyard earlier in Matthew where the man owned a vineyard and sent his servants and they kept murdering the servants and finally he sent his son and they murdered his son. And he says, in effect, that's what you've done, you've killed the prophets and now you've killed the Son of God.

The prophets are classic illustrations of those men who in speaking the truth suffered affliction and did it with patience. In Acts 7 verse 25 a familiar text to those of you who have studied that wonderful story of Stephen. And he says, "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by His hand would deliver them but they understood not." And he goes on through this whole chapter to chronolog the history of Israel...all the way down in the flow, a tragedy upon tragedy of unbelief, the rejection of the prophets of God, the rejection of the oracles of God. And, of course, the net effect, verse 52, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted and they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the just one of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers." And the Jews killed him on the spot, they stoned Stephen to death for indicting them for killing the prophets.

Well all of that to say the prophets were the victims of persecution. Think back, for example, about Moses who endured a stiff necked and rebellious people, yet was faithful and meek. Think back to David who was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains yet trusted God, waited for deliverance and wrote volumes of truth regarding God's saving power. Think of Elijah whose life was sought by the wicked leaders of Israel, particularly Ahab and Jezebel, his pagan wife, and yet he was faithful to speak God's words of judgment. Think of Jeremiah who was constantly persecuted yet would not complain but said, "Why should any living mortal or any man offer complaint in view of his sins?" Jeremiah said that in Lamentations 3:39. In other words, why should I complain, I'm a sinner, I deserve nothing anyway. And Ezekiel who suffered painful sorrow was the very condition in which he prophesied, read the twenty-fourth chapter. Twenty-fourth chapter, God said, "Wail and be sorrowful, you're going to be a living illustration." And you know what the illustration was? Your wife is going to die. And his wife died on the spot as an illustration. That was some illustration, God took his wife and he suffered the pain of the loss of his life partner in order to make a statement to the people what God was going to do to them. He was going to kill them just like He had taken Ezekiel's wife. He suffered greatly to get the message across.

Daniel, deported, put in a den of lions but endured with great faith. Hosea, whose marriage was a disaster and a heartbreak, but in that very heartbreak came the Lord's message to the people and he was so patient. John the Baptist beheaded for the Word of God because he was preaching boldly. He endured the persecution and the hatred that was coming at him and finally ended in his death. And how can you leave without talking about Hebrews 11? This subject is fulfilled most clearly there. What more can I say...verse 32...to speak of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promise, stopped the mouths of lions. They quenched the violence of fire, verse 34. Escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong. Became valiant in fight. Turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others, speaking of the prophets and saints of the past, had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, moreover of bonds and imprisonment, they were stoned, they were sawn in half, they were tested, slain with a sword, wandered around in sheepskin and goatskin, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth.

The world wasn't even worthy of such heroes of the faith. And they're the examples. And then he says in chapter 12, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin that does so easily beset us and let us run...listen to this...with patience the race that is set before us." They were patient and we need to be patient. They were patient in faith, believing God. So the third point...one, anticipate the Lord's coming. Two, recognize the Lord's judgment. Three, follow the Lord's servants, take them for your model...take them for your model. And then he says in chapter 12 verse 3, "You haven't endured unto blood yet, have you?" It hasn't cost you your life like some of them, including Christ.

Number four, in facing trials with patience, understand the Lord's blessing...understand the Lord's blessing. Verse 11, "Behold, we consider them happy who endure." "We consider" means it's common opinion. We, in general, call people who endure through trials blessed. They are acknowledged to be blessed, happy, admirable people who endured. And that is the word hupomone, who have endured the event, the trial, the trying circumstance. We call them blessed.

So what he's saying here is understand the Lord's blessing. In other words, people who are going through we consider to be blessed by God when they endure. We've seen God bless them abundantly. The blessings, may I remind you, come not to people who do great things, the blessings come to people who endure great things. That's right. And when James and John and their mother went to Jesus in Matthew's gospel chapter 20 and said, "Can my boy sit on Your right and left hand in the Kingdom?" He said, "It's not for Me to give, it's for the Father to give and He gives it to whomsoever He will." But the key ingredient is simply this, the ones who will receive the greatest glory in the world to come are the ones who endured the greatest suffering in the world that is. Jesus

said, "I can't give that, the Father will give that," and the implication was He will give it to the one who has endured the must...the most because Jesus then said, "Are you able to drink the cup that I shall drink?" To endure the terrible experience that I will endure? And stupidly they said sure. They had no idea of what they were talking about. He who suffered most said, "Could you suffer most said, "Could you suffer to this degree?" And the implication was that the eternal reward is reserved for those who suffer the most. The greater the suffering the greater the reward. We consider, says James, those who endure the suffering as blessed. So understand that. Understand that God blesses those who endure, in this life and in the life to come. That's a marvelous thought. God blesses those who endure in this life and the life to come, blessing out of brokenness.

Fifthly, James say realize the Lord's purpose...realize the Lord's purpose. "You have heard of the endurance of Job," it's again the word hupomone, he switches back to the word hupomoneat the end here. "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, the endurance under trial of Job, and have seen..." and then you see the word "end" better translate it "the purpose of the Lord." In other words, consider this that God has a purpose in your trial. God has a purpose in your suffering. "You have heard," what does he mean by that? Well, common knowledge. Job was one of the most popular and familiar stories of Jewish tradition. Why? Because it was the story of a righteous man and a story of a passionate God...and they loved to tell that story. And it was a story of a man who defeated Satan, as it were, in the power of God, a very, very familiar story.

Job was a godly man. Satan came to God and said, "I don't think You have one man on the earth that will be true to You." He said, "Yes I do, Job." And He said, "Satan, you can't kill him but you can do just about everything else you want to him and I'll prove that he's a faithful man. I'll show you that I can have a man who is totally committed to Me."

Satan went after Job. Destroyed him in every way possible. Took away his family. Killed his children. Took away all his crops, his land, his possessions, everything he owned, gave him serious, severe disease. And in it all, Job never wavered. He endured. He complained now and then, but mostly about his dumb friends who were giving him stupid answers as to what was going on. His wife tried to get him to curse God and die, and he refused to do it. And he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." He said, "The Lord gave, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Incredible man...he endured, he endured, he endured. He cried out to God in confusion. He listened to his friends give him all the wrong reports as to why it was happening. But he endured and he endured and he did no sin with his mouth, it says.

This marvelous man went through the most incredible trial, the death of all of his children, the loss of all of his possessions, down to nothing and his body covered with horrible boils and could say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." And he even went further and said, "If this body is destroyed," he said, "The worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall see for myself and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." God will never forsake me. He

endured. He endured. Why? He saw the purpose of God. And at the end, what did he say? "I had heard of You with the hearing of my ear and now my eye sees You and I repent in dust and ashes."

What did he mean by that? Now I know who You are, God. I never saw You in my good times as clearly as I saw You in my bad times. I see that. I see who You are.

What was God's purpose with Job? One, to test his faith and prove it real. Two, to strengthen his faith so that he would see God more clearly. Three, to prove to Satan that there was a man totally a lover of God no matter what it cost. And fourthly, to increase Job's blessedness because the book ends with Job being blessed. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, also the Lord gave Job...get this...twice as much as he had before. And there came to him all his brethren, all his sisters, all they that had been of his acquaintances before, they did eat bread with him in his house. They bemoaned him, comforted him over all the evil the Lord had brought upon him, every man also gave him a piece of money and every one an earring of gold so the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. He had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she asses, he also had seven sons and three daughters." God blessed him. That was the purpose of God. One, test his faith. Two, demonstrate to Satan that there was a man with true faith. Three, help him to know God better. And four, bless him more than he ever was blessed before

Can you handle that? Can you handle the fact that when you go through a trial God has a greater thing in mind, a purpose in mind? Look at verse 11, "You know the patience of Job and have seen the purpose of the Lord." In Job's case God had a goal in mind. God blessed him for his persevering faith and God had a wonderful, wonderful goal in mind for him...greater blessing. And He has it for us. You say, "How do you know that?" Because God works all things together for...what?...good, Romans 8:28, for them that love Him.

So patience in any trial comes when we anticipate the Lord's coming and live in the light of it...comes when we recognize the Lord's judgment and live in the fear of it...comes when we follow the Lord's servants and live in the pattern of that...comes when we understand the Lord's blessing that He wants to bless us and we can be counted happy if we endure. And fifthly, patience comes when we realize the Lord's purpose. He's doing something to us, He's perfecting us. He's getting ready to do greater things for us.

And sixthly and finally, patience comes when we understand the Lord's character or consider the Lord's character. Do you ever get into a trial and you begin to question the character of God? Job really kind of asked those questions. "Lord, are You there? Anybody home up there?" God never answered, you know. "Lord, are You the God I think You are?" Those questions had to be in his mind. And so this is the way verse 11 ends, "You...he says...have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the purpose of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of...what?...tender mercy, or

compassion." Consider the Lord's character. Whatever you're going through, He's compassionate. Whatever you're going through, He's tender. He's merciful. He's full of pity.

All throughout the Old Testament it says "The Lord is full of compassion...the Lord is full of mercy." And you remember when Moses in Exodus 33 and 34 wanted to see God, God let him see His mercy and His grace. He said, "Show me Your glory." And God showed him His mercy and God showed him His grace. His mercies are new every morning, Lamentations 3:22 and 23 says. God is merciful. God is compassionate. Those attributes would wonderful to study them in depth and detail. The word "very pitiful," you know what that means? That is really an interesting word. Poluswhich means "many," and splanchnoswhich means "bowels." God is many boweled. Isn't that interesting? You say, "That isn't very interesting to me." Well let me tell you why it's interesting. The Jews always...always spoke of the bowels or the stomach as the seat of feeling because they could feel in their stomachs. We don't feel anything in our heart, we talk about the heart where we have feeling but we don't feel it there. We feel it in the gut, to say it in the colloquial expression. And to be many boweled, literally, is to say God has a massive capacity for compassion. He feels things, deeply, broadly, greatly. By the way, that man is coined by James. That word has never appeared anywhere that anyone has ever found prior to James and later on was picked up and used by some pagan writers, but it appears to have been coined by James. God is not just compassionate, He is multiplied compassion.

And then of tender mercy. It just means He's tender, soft-hearted. He bears our infirmities. He carries our cares. That's why the Bible says, "Cast your cares on Him for He...what?...cares for you." Let Him bear your burdens. He knows your trial.

What are you going through? You going through the darkness of some trial, maybe a trial in your family, maybe a trial in your marriage, maybe you're struggling as a husband and wife? And maybe weeping is enduring for a night and you're looking for some joy in the morning. Maybe it's a child that's disappointed you. Maybe it's a struggle financially. Maybe you have a disease. Maybe you've struggled with work. Many trials. Whatever they are, know this...suffering, trial, trouble, affliction, whether it's physical, emotional, economic, whatever kind...it just goes with the territory. How we going to deal with it? Well start living anticipating the Lord's coming. And when you anticipate that, recognize that He comes as a judge and you don't want to let those trials cause you to sin in some way that will be embarrassing to you when He comes, or suffer the loss of some reward. And then follow the Lord's examples. Remind yourself of Hebrews chapter 12 that you haven't yet suffered unto blood and remember those who did who were sawn in half, whose heads were chopped off, those who endured things that we haven't even thought of enduring and were patient. And then consider the Lord's blessing that the more you endure the greater the blessing. And then consider the Lord's purpose that He has something in mind to perfect in you and something for His own glory by your trial. And then lastly, remember the Lord's character. He is compassionate. He understands and He will never let you have more than you can bear and you'll always find His tender mercy along

with it. Very practical.

So he says, if you're the wicked wealthy, I condemn you. And if you're the oppressed poor, you're the ones being persecuted, I exhort you...be patient, a better day is coming even in this life as God accomplishes the purpose here and certainly in the life to come. Let's pray together.

Lord, it's such a joy to be learning these passages. And we thank You that You've given us Your Word and told us to study it. We're not here to preach fancy sermons, to speak in the words of men's wisdom. We're not here to tickle ears or show erudition, to speak human philosophy, but simply to understand the Word of God. And how wonderful to now have in our grasp these wonderful five verses which we now understand of Your glorious truth to us. Make us patient in the little trials which we endure and in the great ones. May we manifest both the hupomone, the endurance in the circumstance, and the makrothumia, the patience with the people, that would be an honor to You. And may we endure with hope in our hearts, looking for Your coming, endure with a healthy fear that says I don't want to lose the reward, I don't want to be found in sin when He comes and though I still receive eternal life in all its fullness, somehow forfeit what might have been mine for all eternity with which to offer praise. And help us to take as our examples those great men of God and women who suffered willingly and patiently and quietly even as our Lord. And help us to know Your blessing and to understand that You're working out Your purpose and we rest in Your compassionate character. And with these things in mind and refreshed again and again as we read over and over this same passage, we'll know the joy of patience even in the trials. And we thank You for Christ's sake. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).