

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Life Application Sunday School Class

The Book of James – Session 17

May 19, 2002

READ James 5:7-12

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. ¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

As we begin to look at this passage, let's first state the overall theme. Patience and perseverance in the midst of suffering. Remember James 1:2? Count it all joy when you encounter trials, knowing that they produce perseverance. James is encouraging these believers to hold fast, and not give up, and to continue pressing forward in their works of faith, knowing that there is an end coming. Specifically, in the context of chapter five, James is addressing the subject of the oppression of godly people by the unregenerate rich. He exhorts the believers to focus on the Lord's coming in the midst of such persecution and suffering, realizing that when He appears He will judge righteously. James uses the example of the farmer, and his patience and perseverance after the planting to wait for the harvest. He gives the example of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord and were many times rejected by the hearers, and yet they persevered. And James also points back to Job as an example of persevering faith in the midst of great suffering.

Let's take a closer look at the word "patient". The greek word used here is makrothumeo " Makro means long, and thumeo is the word for passion or temper. It literally means long-tempered. "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy, and is used of God." If a person demonstrates biblical patience, he is slow to get angry and express his wrath towards another person, even in the face of provocation.

When we see injustice, and unfair treatment of others or ourselves, it produces a sense of indignation and righteousness within us. When we see the name of Christ misused and abused and mocked, we certainly have an emotional response. When we see those we love mistreated and put down, it hurts and stirs us inside. And James would say, what we need to exercise at that point is long-passion. We need to be very slow to allow that anger to control us and express itself in outward actions of wrath toward the unrighteous person. When tempted to lash out at injustice, and express hostility towards those who have come against us or against someone we love, we need to ask the Lord for His restraining power and help, and our thoughts need to be directed to the fact that it is the Lord's place to show forth wrath towards the unrighteous, and there is a day coming when that will happen. That is the day of His coming, when all wrongs will be made right.

When we yield to the Holy Spirit and refuse to retaliate when wronged, we are manifesting the nature and character of God Himself.

Look at II Peter 3:3-16

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is **patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 **But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.** 14 So then, dear friends, since you are **looking forward to this**, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's **patience** means salvation,

It is the fact that God is longsuffering that we are saved. He does not immediately explode His wrath toward sin, but holds it until the appointed time. And when we are tempted to give into anger toward unrighteousness, we need to focus on that day when God will judge all unrighteousness. For those who have received Christ, that wrath toward sin has already been expressed at the cross. But for those outside of Christ, their sins remain and will be judged. Who are we to judge those sins before the time? The Judge will take care of all unrighteousness, but is holding off for a season until He saves His people. When tempted to unleash our anger and fury towards unrighteousness, we need to consider God, who holds His wrath until the appointed time, and expresses patience, mercy and kindness, and do the same.

We need to be like the farmer, who patiently waits with anticipation for the harvest. For us, there is a great time of blessing coming, but it is yet future. The present suffering is working an eternal weight of glory in us, so we need to patiently endure at the hands of others injustice and wickedness toward us. We need to respond in compassion and mercy, reflecting the nature of our Father who sends the rain and provision to those who scorn Him and curse His name.

Look now at verse 9. The pressure of mistreatment and hardship brings another temptation, the temptation to grumble against each other. This word for grumble means to groan, or sigh. It is a burden and weariness expressed towards others disobedience or shortcomings. It is the same word translated burden in Hebrews 13:17

*Heb 13: 17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a **burden**, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

In the midst of our suffering and trials, we need to guard against sighing and groaning about others. James says we will be judged if we sigh and grumble towards our brothers and sisters. We need to express patience towards those who seem so slow to grow. We need to consider how patient the Lord has been and is towards us.

James then points to the prophets as examples of endurance and long suffering in the midst of suffering and persecution. How often the prophets of God would speak and were ignored or spurned? Yet they continued on in their proclamations of truth, despite the fact that the vast majority rejected them and their message. There is a New Testament passage that exhorts us to the same.

II Timothy 4:1-5 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great **patience** and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

As people despise and turn away from the truth, we need to patiently continue to preach and teach the Word, and continue to express longsuffering and patience towards those who oppose us, realizing that in the midst of our patience God may grant

repentance to them. Paul told Timothy that in those cases, he was to endure hardship. The proper response to opposition is endurance. Don't grow weary in well doing, but continue to sow the seed, for God promises a harvest and reward to those who persevere.

And then James gives the example of Job, the man who lost everything, but refused to curse God and cave in to the pressure of those closest to him. He held fast to His trust in God, and though he certainly didn't always express patience according to our definition of patience, he held fast to his belief in his Redeemer. And God was faithful to Job. We need to look to the end of the story. We need to have great hope based on our faith in what God has promised is coming to those who love Him and His appearing. We need to look at that sparse field and know that a great harvest of bounty is coming. We need to affirm that our God is compassionate and merciful, and that He will take pity on His children.

And finally, during times of pressure and opposition, and rejection, we need to refuse to yield to the temptation of going beyond a simple yes or no to our accusers. When those who are opposing us question our integrity and our honesty, we need only to quietly affirm the truth, and not degenerate into swearing. If we have the Spirit of truth living in us, then our simple yes or no should be sufficient on any matter. We need to offer nothing more to anyone. Our word is our bond. Our yes should mean yes every time.

Now let's apply this passage to our lives today.

1. Think about a time in your life, perhaps even now, when you were misunderstood and opposed. How did you feel about it, and how did you feel like responding?
2. From this lesson, how do you think the Lord would have you to respond in times when you are being treated unfairly?
3. How does responding in mercy and kindness when mistreated express our faith?
4. When are you most tempted to become impatient with fellow Christians? What heart issues may be behind this temptation to sigh or grumble toward our brothers and sisters? We need to put off grumbling. What should we "put on" in the place of it?
5. In this culture, we rarely face overt persecution. What trials do we face in this arena where we need to learn patience and long suffering?