

## Message #17

## James 5:7-11

When we were coming back from Florida, we hit Indianapolis and the sun was shining, but 50 miles north the sky became dark and we found ourselves in a blizzard. After several miles of driving in the dark, the sun was shining again.

The spiritual life is like that. Sometimes it appears as if things are shining and then all of a sudden we are hit with the dark clouds and storms.

Kent Hughes made an interesting observation during the years of his ministry. He said that he noticed when people were hurting or going through difficulty they frequently said they hoped the Lord would return soon. He heard many people in that condition say, "Oh I wish the Lord would return today." I have heard the same thing. In fact, I have said it myself. When people are going through tough times, you will often hear them say that. But Mr. Hughes said, I have never heard anyone say, "Things are going so well...I wish Christ would return right now" (*James*, p. 222). It is true that when things are going great, you don't often hear that. I must admit you don't hear too many people say, "I am being so blessed in every area of my life right now that I wish Jesus Christ would return and take me out of here."

It is typically the hard times and the dark times that make us long for the return of Jesus Christ. One of the real threats we have is that life sometimes becomes so comfortable for us that we don't want to leave this world. We have so much and we have things so good that we tend to want to hang on to this life as long as we can. But it was certainly not true back in the days of James.

Those early believers suffered and hurt and one of the wonderful hopes they had was that Jesus Christ would come get them and take them out of this world.

I think the thing that prompts us to want out of this world is the world itself. We are sick of struggling in this world. We see evil and sin and rebellion breaking loose at a very unusual level. We get sick of the struggle with the world, the flesh and the Devil and we want out. As we wait for this moment, God wants His people patiently enduring the difficulties, knowing that in the end they will receive the merciful blessings of God.

God wants His people to stay committed, stay dedicated, stay faithful, keep working and endure the tough dark hours, knowing that He will bless them for it. The point of these verses is simple to see:

**PATIENTLY ENDURE HARDSHIPS UNTIL THE LORD RETURNS KNOWING YOU WILL RECEIVE THE WONDERFUL, MERCIFUL, ABUNDANT BLESSINGS OF GOD.**

These believers in James' day had literally been scattered for their faith in Christ (1:1). Rich businessmen were thriving and not taking good care of their employees, many of whom were believers. Some of the believers had actually died (5:6) because of the mistreatment and maltreatment. The morale was low.

James says be patient and endure the difficulties and in the end you will receive the abundant blessings of God.

**We may notice that five times in these five verses the word “patient” is used.** This is the crucial word of this section.

The word “patient” (μακροθυμew) is a word that means to be long-tempered. This particular word has to do with a forbearing patience when experiencing troubles and difficulties (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 276). Patience is a godly quality. In fact, this is a word used to describe an attribute of God (Rom. 2:4). This kind of patience is developed in times of trouble.

What James says to these believers is that the Christian life at times will feature some trying times. There will be trials and troubles and dark moments. During those times patiently wait for God to shine the sun because in the end you will experience the great blessings of God.

Now in these verses there are five motivations for patiently enduring difficulties:

**MOTIVATION #1** – Because this is an imperative command of God. **5:7**

The verb “be patient” is an imperative command. This is not just a nice suggestion or request. God has commanded us to develop patience. Now we are commanded to be patient “until the coming of the Lord.”

In the New Testament that idea of “the coming of the Lord” can refer to five things:

**Meaning #1** - Be patient until the Rapture. I Thess. 4 - Christ comes to rapture church.

**Meaning #2** - Be patient until Christ's Second Coming (Rev. 19) - To reign on earth.

**Meaning #3** - Be patient until Christ's church judgment (Rev. 2:5).

**Meaning #4** - Be patient until Christ's individual salvation (Rev. 3:20).

**Meaning #5** - Be patient until Christ delivers from trials and blesses (James 5).

It is this 5<sup>th</sup> meaning that James primarily has in mind and to prove it he uses the illustration of the farmer (James 5:5b).

The Jewish farmer was aware of the early and late rains. These are often spoken of in the O.T. (Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23; Deut. 11:14). The early rains in Palestine came in the fall. The early rains came in the autumn months of October and November. The later rains came in the spring, the months of March, April and May.

Now a farmer, knowing this, would typically plant his crop in the late summer, just before those autumn rains. He would harvest in the early summer or late spring after the spring rains.

James' point was this. **When a farmer had planted his crop, he knew that he needed patience and dependence on God and he knew in proper time he would reap the blessings.** The Jewish farmer knew that prosperity did not happen overnight. At the right time one would reap.

If we were farmers and acted the same way we expect God to act in our spiritual lives we would be broke. No farmer in his right mind plants seed and then expects the next day to see great growth. Think of the foolishness of a mentality that would plant a seed and expect to see immediate results the next day and if he didn't he would quit and give up. That is the folly of many believers. We expect to see immediate deliverance and James says be patient like a farmer and your blessings will come.

**MOTIVATION #2** – Because of the nearness of the coming of the Lord. **5:8**

The early church always believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. They believed Jesus Christ could come at any moment. This thought should stimulate every believer to stay faithful. This should motivate us to keep learning and growing and developing.

The specific point was that James wanted the believers to remain faithful while enduring hardships knowing that at some point we will be delivered. We need to be patient and we need to strengthen our hearts. It is during difficulties that our hearts need strengthening.

Now how do we strengthen our hearts? Our hearts are strengthened by a transformation of mind and our faith is developed by the Word of God.

**MOTIVATION #3** – Because of the future judgment of Christ. **5:9**

Apparently what was happening is that this group of believers started complaining against each other. In fact, the pronoun "another" means another of the same kind. So when things got difficult, instead of the believers bannng together and rallying around each other, they turned against each other.

The word "complain" is interesting. It is a word that has to do with unexpressed, internal negative attitudes more than verbal outbursts. In other words, there was a negative deterioration taking place within the people against each other.

Now James says stop that. In fact, this is an imperative that basically commands stop the complaining and wait patiently for God. Why should we stop it? Because judgment is coming.

The judge is standing at the door of every believer's heart and if one persists in their complaining against one another, they are heading to serious judgment.

**Now what is certainly clear from this text is that by making adjustments in life as a believer it is possible to prevent judgment.**

Now as far as the judgment by the Judge, it may mean a couple of things:

**Meaning #1** - Stop complaining or you will be judged at the Bema Seat and lose rewards.

**Meaning #2** - Stop complaining because the judge stands ready to open the door of blessings if you do.

The point is instead of complaining about each other in the midst of the trouble, patiently endure it and God will open the door of blessings for you.

**MOTIVATION #4** – Because of the faithful example of the prophets. **5:10**

James says we have tremendous examples of those who patiently endured trouble in prophets. Notice why they were having the trouble: because “they spoke in the name of the Lord.” In other words, the reason they found themselves in trouble is that they were presenting the Word of God.

They were not popular because their message contradicted the popular consensus. They stood up and spoke up for God’s truth and they suffered for it.

One of the prophets who really faced the forces of hell was Jeremiah. He spoke the truth of God against the false religious system of the Babylonians and Israel and life was not pleasant:

- 1) Jer. 15:10 - Everyone in the world cursed him for his presentation of God’s Word. But 15:16 says the Word of God gave him joy in his heart.
- 2) Jer. 18:18 - His own people turned against him and verbally assassinated him but God was with him (20:7, 10-11). Why did they turn against him? His presentation of God’s Word did not line up with other priests, wise men or prophets.
- 3) Jer. 20:2 - He was put in stocks – hands, feet, head literally bound in horrible unpleasantness.
- 4) Jer. 32:2 - He was put in prison.
- 5) Jer. 38:6 - He was put in a dungeon.

Why did he suffer like this? He stood up for the Word of God. But when that happened to him “God drew near him” (Lam. 3:55-57).

What an example. Stay faithful and God will bless.

**MOTIVATION #5** – Because of the merciful blessings God gives to those who endure. **5:11**

James uses a different word for patience here. It is a word that has in view “endurance.” Job is a great example of an enduring believer. He lost his wealth, family and personal health and he endured. There were times when his faith was stretched to the max, but listen to his faith “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).

The mark of spirituality is to endure, not quit. It is not the mark to give up, but to patiently wait on God for His blessing.

That is exactly what Job did and the result is in Job 42:10-17 - God prospered him double.

If we stand for the truth of God and the grace of God and the Word of God, we are heading to great blessings. Let us be like the wise farmer who sows and then keeps at the work waiting to reap the blessings of the harvest.