

Grumble-Free Zone

Hang in There Part 3
James 5:8-9 9-6-2015

Summary: When you are being mistreated, strengthen your heart (so that you don't become double-minded) because His coming is near (we need to be ready for it). And be nice. Suffering tends to make us irritable with each other, but we must be peacemakers instead, lest we be judged. God hates grumbling.

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction: First the Heart, then the Problem..... | 1 |
| Be Strong..... | 2 |
| Double mindedness | 2 |
| Your Responsibility | 2 |
| Because of His Coming..... | 3 |
| End of the World | 4 |
| The Nearness of the Second Coming | 4 |
| What Does "Near" Mean? | 4 |
| How to Strengthen Your Heart | 5 |
| Be Nice | 5 |
| Against..... | 5 |
| Peacemaking - Again..... | 6 |
| Someone Hurts You | 6 |
| Someone Does a Poor Job | 7 |
| Someone Sins | 8 |
| The Judge is at the Door | 8 |
| Don't Grumble | 8 |
| God Hates Grumbling..... | 9 |
| Conclusion: Loving God's Judgment..... | 9 |
| Application Questions (James 1:25) | 10 |

James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See, the farmer waits for the valuable crop of the land, being patient until he receives the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, so that you will not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful. 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, so that you will not fall under judgment.

Introduction: First the Heart, then the Problem

It was a rough time for the readers of James. They were being mistreated and oppressed. Terrible things were happening to them, and as a result, they were turning against each other inside the church. There was all kinds of fighting and quarreling and judging and grumbling against each other. And that is pretty common – the more the suffering increases, the more we have a tendency to become irritable with each other. But it is interesting how James deals with the problem. He rebukes the people who are causing all the suffering, and he pronounces judgment on them, but he doesn't do that until chapter 5. What did he do for the first four chapters? He taught us how to diagnose and cure the underlying heart problems that

cause us to become irritable with each other when we are suffering. That is very instructive. Four chapters dealing with our own heart problems and not until chapter 5 does he deal with the people causing our suffering. When someone is “driving” you to sin with their behavior, the main solution is not to get them to stop. The main solution has nothing to do with them.

And even in chapter 5 where James does finally mention the people causing the suffering, he does not say anything about how to get them to stop hurting you. It is still all about our hearts. That’s great news for us, because if the only solution to my sin problem were to get the people around me to stop hurting me, then it would be outside of my control. But my own heart is something that I always have access to.

So James is teaching us what kind of heart responses we should have when we are mistreated, and he started with patience.

James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming.

James is going to give us three commands in this section. The first one is to be patient; the second one is in verse 8 – **be strong**.

Be Strong

Literally it is:

8 ...Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near.

When you are suffering; when you are being mistreated; when life is unfair – be patient, and be strong.

The word **strengthen** means to make something immovable. It is the word used in Luke 16 to describe the immovable gulf set between heaven and hell. It is the word used of Jesus’ resolve to go to die on the cross in Jerusalem. In Luke 9:51 it says Jesus **strengthened His face to go to Jerusalem**. He turned in that direction with immovable, unchangeable, unbending, non-negotiable resolve. And James is saying, “Do that to your heart.”

Strengthening the heart stands in contrast to what the rich people were doing in verse 5. When he said **you have fattened yourself in the day of slaughter**, literally it’s **you have fattened your heart in the day of slaughter**.

They had lived in luxury and self-indulgence to the point where their inner man was fat and soft and flabby and weak. And James says, “Instead of doing that, **strengthen your heart**.”

Double-mindedness

If you let your inner man become weak and flabby, the result will be double-mindedness, which James has been warning us about all through the book.¹ Double-mindedness is weakness in the inner man that causes us to be unstable and vacillating – now I’m following Christ; now I’m not. Now I am praising God, now I am criticizing people even though they are in God’s image. Now I am praying to God; now I am in love with the world. In 4:8 he called us to repent of our double-mindedness, and part of that repentance involves doing what you can to strengthen your heart so it can remain steadfast and firm, and it does not blow back and forth in the winds whenever suffering or temptation come along.

Your Responsibility

And the fact that this is a command shows that it is our responsibility. In other places Scripture says that it is God who strengthens our hearts.² But in this passage, we are told to do it. That is the mystery of sanctification.³ We put forth effort, and when that effort succeeds, it is the work of God.

¹ 1: 6-8, 2:4, 3:11-12, 4:4, 4:8.

² 1 Thes.3:13, 2 Thes.2:17.

Steer clear of those teachers who say that human effort is a work of the flesh. Over and over in Scripture we see that the power and grace of God are activated through our hard work, not in place of it.

Several times in our study of James some have wondered if there is too much emphasis on our duty, and not enough emphasis on what Christ has done. I am very sensitive to the real possibility that I have not gotten the balance right. I pray a lot about that, and I frequently double-check my sermons to see if I am missing things that I should be saying. But I have to say, when I look at the book of James, what I see are 55 commands in just five short chapters. And the cross is mentioned zero times.⁴ Now, obviously the cross is central, which is why I have mentioned it many, many times in our study through James. But we need to understand that the gospel is a complex message. It is more than just, “Jesus died for your sins.” That’s why the Bible is 66 books instead of one sentence. There are some people who aren’t saved because even though they know the basics about Jesus dying for sin and rising from the dead, they don’t understand other aspects – like what it looks like to live by faith, or how love for the world affects the desires of the heart and relationships with people. And very often, the key to those people getting saved is not another sermon on the basics of the cross, but rather a sermon on one of those aspects of the gospel they don’t understand.

So all that to say, let’s not shy away from the commands God gives us. All His commands are good and life-giving and liberating, not burdensome, because they point us to the path of joy in Him. The pathway to the greatest joy in life is the road where when you get mistreated by others, you respond by being patient, and being strong.

Because of His Coming

And take a look at the reason James gives for why we need to be strong.

8 ...Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near.

Why does the nearness of Christ’s coming mean we should strengthen our hearts? I could understand if it said, “The Lord’s coming is still a long way off, so you’d better strengthen your hearts so that you’ll be able to hang in there until He arrives.” That would make sense, but how does it make sense that the nearness of His coming requires us to strengthen our hearts? If He is going to return really soon, why can’t I just have a weak heart? The answer is in the next verse. We need to strengthen our hearts because when He comes, He is coming as judge.

9 Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

The return of Christ will be the time when we will be delivered from those who are oppressing us, but it is also going to be a time when we are going to have to answer to Jesus Christ for times when we have grumbled against each other. And for our dishonesty in verse 12. And also for our lack of love and mercy in 2:12-13. And for our sinful speech in 3:1. And for judging one another in 4:11-12. James has a lot to say in this book about Jesus coming back to judge believers. So now, when he says **strengthen your hearts because the Lord’s coming is near**, he is saying that because he wants us to be ready. He

³ If you have a mentality that something either has to be done by God, or done by man – one or the other – if you think that way, you will be forever confused in reading the Bible. If you think it has to be either human free will, or divine sovereignty, you’ll have constant confusion.

⁴ There are people today who say that every sermon must include a section on the death and resurrection of Jesus. That philosophy of preaching is gaining more and more popularity. And that sounds so good at first. Why not talk about the cross in every sermon? But what people who say that sometimes don’t realize is, if you are preaching on a passage that doesn’t mention the cross, any time you spend talking about the cross is time you are not spending talking about the passage that you are preaching.

Everything in the Bible is important. And if James can write a whole book of the New Testament mentioning Jesus only twice and never mentioning the cross a single time, I don’t think we want to get too legalistic about how often a particular preacher has to mention the cross in his sermons. We want to make our teaching about the cross crystal-clear and central to our message, but we also want to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

does not want Jesus to come back and find us flopping back and forth with double-mindedness. James wants to make sure that when Jesus returns we are the ones being rescued and not punished. Peter had that same emphasis.⁵

1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in fear.

2 Peter 3:10 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.

End of the World

Now let me hasten to add this: The Second Coming of Christ is a day we are eagerly looking forward to – not a day we dread. There is a video on YouTube that has this title: “PRAY, PRAY, PRAY: Huge Comet to hit the earth in September 2015.” They say it is the sixth seal of the book of Revelation. I see that and I think, *Pray, pray, pray? Pray for what?* That it won't happen? Pray that the book of Revelation doesn't come true? The end of this cursed, broken world is not something we dread – it is our greatest hope! It is our deepest longing. But even though we long for it, it is also a motive for us to forsake sin and make sure we are ready. Imagine a kid whose dad is serving in the military, and he hasn't seen him in two years. They don't know exactly when he will return, but it is sometime soon. And so the kid is beside himself with excitement to see his dad again. But in moments of disobedience, sometimes mom will say, “Your dad could walk through that door any minute. Do you want him to come back and find you behaving like this?” The return of the Lord is at the same time sobering when we are in sin, and also exciting and thrilling to our hearts. Dad could walk through that door any minute, and so Scripture teaches us, “Live your life with your eye on the door, because His coming is near.”

The Nearness of the Second Coming

So what does it mean that it is near? How are we supposed to take that seriously when it has already been 2000 years?

The liberals see passages like this and say that the writers of the New Testament thought that Jesus would come back in their lifetime, but they were mistaken. Evidently those critics forgot to read John 21:18, where Jesus said Peter would grow old and then be crucified. So they knew for sure that it wouldn't happen during Peter's lifetime. In 2 Peter 3:4 Peter tells us that the delay of Jesus return is going to be so long that scoffers are going to mock the idea by pointing to all the generations that have come and gone without Jesus' return. Paul instructed Timothy to train a generation of men who would be faithful to train the next generation. Jesus told the Apostles that first the gospel had to be preached to all nations, then He would return.

What Does “Near” Mean?

So when the Bible writers say that Jesus return is “near,” what did that mean? It means it is imminent. We don't know how long it is going to be, but we need to be ready. The verb in verse 8 is actually in the perfect tense, which means it is a completed action. Literally it is - **Strengthen your**

⁵ Paul makes a similar point in Titus 2. **Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation ... 12 teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,** When we consider the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a motivation to live a godly life.

hearts, because the Lord's coming *has drawn near*. The drawing near is a completed action. He has already made His way to the gate, and is right there, outside the gate. He could burst in at any time.

Imagine some kids in the classroom, and the teacher leaves for a while. But then he comes back. Everyone hears his footsteps as he approaches the door. And then they stop. Now everybody knows he is standing right outside the door, but nobody knows when he will open it. That is the picture. Again, live with your eye on the door. Remember the old Larry Norman song: *Man and wife asleep in bed, she hears a noise she turns her head he's gone. I wish we'd all been ready. There's no time to change your mind, the Son has come and you've been left behind.*

How to Strengthen Your Heart

So James calls us to strengthen our hearts as we anticipate His return so we will be ready. And if you are wondering how to do that, James already told us back in chapter 1. The way to become strong and steadfast in perseverance so that you are not wishy-washy and double-minded is by having the right response to suffering and trials (1:2-4). Perseverance is like a muscle – you make it stronger by using it. Persevere through little, easy suffering, and that will make you a little bit stronger to handle a little more suffering. Let that process continue until you reach maturity – that is how you strengthen your heart.

Be Nice

Ok, let's move on to verse 9. I told you this passage gives us three commands about how to respond when you are being mistreated. So far we have seen two of them: be patient and be strong. The third one is in verse 9.

9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, so that you will not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the door!

So what do we need to remember when times are tough? Verse 7: Be Patient. Verse 8: Be Strong. Now in verse 9: Be Nice. **Don't grumble against one another.**

Against

Notice that word **against**. It is important that we understand that there is no such thing as neutral grumbling. Grumbling is always against someone – either God or other people. Whenever we complain about circumstances, “The weather is so hot,” “I hate this snow,” “this stupid traffic,” - God is in charge of circumstances, so when we grumble about circumstances, we are grumbling against God.

And in many cases, our grumbling turns against one another as well. Things get rough, and right away we start assigning blame.

“Whose fault is this?”

We forget that we are not the judge. It slips our mind that we are not the master that all the servants in the church are answerable to. We just want to figure out who is to blame, so we can get on with blaming them.

And if no one is to blame, that's ok – we will grumble against each other anyway just because we are irritable. You can have a team of people working together in the church – maybe the praise team, or the elder board, or whatever, and they get along great. They love each other, they handle their differences biblically, they never get into fights or quarrels. But then some suffering comes. Some things go wrong, and the pressure starts to bear down. And the next thing you know, they are picking at each other. And they start grumbling about each other. And they start becoming suspicious about each other's motives, and all that unity they had goes out the window.

This word for **grumble** is a broad term. It can even refer to a groan or a sigh. Sometimes our grumbling against each other can be pretty subtle. A certain person's name is mentioned and you just sigh, or roll your eyes a little bit. Even that invites God's judgment on your life.

Peacemaking - Again

James has been hammering away on this theme throughout the entire book.

Chapter 1 – be humble and slow to anger.

Chapter 2 – anyone who does not show mercy will be judged without mercy.

Chapter 3 – you are speaking against people who were made in the image of God. My brothers this should not be!

End of chapter 3 – get rid of envy and selfishness and pride and replace it with a heart that is peace loving.

Chapter 4 – what causes fights and quarrels among you?

Middle of chapter 4 – do not speak against your brother or judge him.

And now here in chapter 5 he is at it again – do not grumble against one another or you will be judged. James just won't let this go. It is so important to him and to the Holy Spirit that we learn the principles of peacemaking.

Think of the kinds of things that typically cause you to grumble against people in the church. In most cases it is one of three things: either they hurt you, or they did a poor job in ministry, or they committed some sin. Let's think through the peacemaking principles for each one of those.

Someone Hurts You

Some of you are most tempted to grumble when you get hurt by someone in the church. Betrayal, gossip, neglect, lack of love or support or warmth or loyalty in your friendship, ignoring you, failure to help you. How can you be a peacemaker instead of a grumbler when that happens? Scripture gives us some very clear principles: If it is small enough that you can overlook it, overlook it. And overlooking it means you don't dwell on it, you don't think about it, you don't talk about it, and you don't allow it to have any impact at all on the way you view that person or the way you feel about that person.

If it is something that is too serious to overlook, then go to the person and try to work it out. And that is where we so often fail. Most people hate conflict and so they won't do this. They'll say, "It's not that big a deal - no need for me to go talk to the person. It's a big enough deal to where I can't completely overlook it, so it is affecting my attitude toward the person, but it's not a big enough deal for me to go talk to the person."

That is how relationships are destroyed. You can't overlook it, but you won't deal with it either, so it just sticks in your heart and poisons your attitude. And then something else happens and that sticks in your heart. Then something else, and something else until there is a pile of grievances, most of which you don't even remember anymore, but you have built up so much resentment and bitterness that you find it impossible to love that person now. This is how marriages are destroyed. And it is also how churches are destroyed.

Here is what we need to understand: There is no such thing as an offense that is too big to overlook but too small to confront. If you can't overlook it completely, you *must* go to that person and work it out. But when you go, do it gently and with humility, not with pride or hostility. Go as a peacemaker. There are three kinds of people:

- 1) Those who respond to a conflict with hostility and anger – those are the peace breakers.
- 2) Those who respond to a conflict by withdrawal and running away – those are the peace fakers.
- 3) But God calls us to be peacemakers - who courageously deal with the problem and bring about peace.

And if you want guidance on that, just go back to James 3:17 where he gave us all the ingredients for peacemaking. Start with purity in your own heart. Then, go with a peace-loving attitude - not to shame the person, not to win an argument, not to get them to change their behavior so that your life is easier. Your goal is to make peace.

Thirdly, be considerate. Before you tell them what they did wrong, make sure you fully understand their point of view. Sympathize with the kinds of temptations and struggles that may have led them to do or say what they did that hurt you. Keep working at understanding their point of view until you can get to the point where you can say, “Is this what you’re thinking...?” And they say, “Yes! That’s *exactly* it!” Once you do that, they will be 100 times more open to hear what you have to say.

And if you find that this is happening to you a lot - most of the time you are offended by someone, or hurt or disappointed, you may need to go back to the beginning of chapter 4 where he talks about hostile desires. A hostile desire is when you desire something in such a way that you get mad if you don’t get it. It is a symptom of looking to something besides God for your joy. If you find yourself getting mad at people for not comforting you the right way you get mad because they are not showing compassion, they aren’t paying attention to you, they are not spending enough time with you, and you respond with anger – it is because you have made an idol out of their time or attention or compassion or whatever it is you are desiring. If that is the case, nothing they do will help – the problem is in your own heart. You need to go to God alone for your joy.

Someone Does a Poor Job

Another time we are tempted to grumble is when someone does a poor job in ministry. They aren’t very skilled at what they do. Or they are unfaithful – you can’t count on them to show up. Or they don’t take it seriously and do shoddy work. What would a peacemaker do in a situation like that?

Again – back to the ingredients of peacemaking in 3:17. Be **full of mercy** in the way you assess that person. Cut them some slack. Consider this: maybe he is underperforming because you have failed to properly motivate and encourage and inspire his heart. Instead of criticizing, find a way to motivate and encourage them and help them improve.

“What if I’m not in a position to do that?”

Then there is no reason for you to be assessing that person.

James 4:12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Why are you assessing the work of someone else’s servant? Focus on your own performance in ministry. Sometimes the people who are most critical of people’s ministries are folks who aren’t even doing anything. They think their calling is to just sit back and take potshots at the ones who are doing the work. Armchair quarterbacks are always so sure they know better than the real quarterbacks. But if they would ever get off their duff and start sharing in the work, they might realize it’s not as easy as it looks.

Or it can work the other way as well. You are working so hard and you are doing so much, you start grumbling against everyone who isn’t doing much.

Or you grumble against people who aren’t as far along as you in the Christian life in some way. And this is something that we at Agape really have to be alert to, because of our high commitment to Scripture. I think one strength in this church is in the area of discernment. In a day when so many churches refuse to use any discernment – they will never point to a doctrine and say, “That’s wrong.” They latch on to every new ministry fad that comes along regardless of whether it is biblical or unbiblical. They sing songs that say things about God that aren’t even true. There is so little discernment in our day, and so at Agape we have been very careful to be a discerning church. And that is great, but there is a danger that comes along with that. Because the more discerning a church is, the easier it is to become critical and judgmental and discouraging. You can develop a culture of criticism, where everyone is picking at each other, pointing out mistakes and flaws, complaining, grumbling, criticizing – and doing it all in the name of discernment. We must be discerning, but we need to do it with a culture of encouragement, not a culture of criticism. When someone fails in ministry, or makes a mistake, or does something poorly, be discerning, but also be encouraging and uplifting and find a way to *inspire* them to do better. Very soon we are going to be sharing with you four big goals that we believe the Lord would

have us strive for as a church over the next few years. And one of them is to shift from being a culture of criticism to a culture of encouragement.

Someone Sins

So we tend to grumble when people hurt us, and when someone does a poor job, and then one more – we tend to grumble against people when we see them committing sin. And you might even think your grumbling is justified because what they are doing really is sinful. But what does a peacemaker do when he witnesses someone else sinning? I love the summary that Ken Sande gives in *The Peacemaker*. He talks about the four G's:

1. Glorify God (make sure all your responses are designed not for your comfort or revenge, but to glorify God)
2. Get the log out of your own eye.
3. Gently restore – Galatians 6:1.
4. Go and be reconciled.

And there is a very helpful checklist in the appendix of Sande's book for how to do each one of those. I can hardly recommend that book highly enough.⁶

So whether it is a situation where someone hurt you, or someone is doing a poor job in ministry, or someone sinned in some way - none of those are good reasons to grumble against one another. And none of those excuses will fly when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ and have to give an explanation for why we were willing to destroy the precious unity of His church by grumbling.

The Judge is at the Door

9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, lest you be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the door!

The wording in the Greek of that **lest you be judged** is a word-for-word quotation from Matthew 7:1 – **Judge not, lest you be judged**. James is quoting Jesus again. But the most literal translation of that phrase actually starts with "**so that**."

9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, so that you will not be judged.

James has made it clear throughout this book that everything is going to be judged. But the one area that James wants to especially highlight as bringing inescapable judgment is the peace-breaking tongue – grumbling against one another. That sin stands out as uniquely egregious. You have seen those T-shirts that say, "Don't mess with Texas"? James' T-shirt said, "Don't mess with the unity of the church." That is one thing you definitely don't want to be guilty of destroying when Jesus comes back.

Don't Grumble

And that is hard because grumbling is most natural thing in the world. But we are called to be different from the world. When people in the world are hurt, they react. They stand up for themselves and become hostile – maybe even violent. But Jesus taught us; when someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Do not resist an evil person. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Some people teach that God is always on the side of the oppressed. But that is not the case of those oppressed people who are grumbling. Liberation theology says that if the people are being oppressed they should revolt and have a revolution. James says, "No, not only should you not take up arms – don't even

⁶ Years ago I wrote a book titled **Forgiveness and Reconciliation**, and when we ran out of copies, I started working on updating the book. But now I think I'm going to give up on that project because there is no need for it. Ken Sande has done such a good job, I don't think I could say it any better than he has.

so much as grumble.” The world puts their hope in revolution and government and political solutions. We put our hope in the return of Christ.

And that should be clear in our speech. The whole world is dominated by grumbling, but the church should be a grumble-free zone. The church should be the one place in the world where you can go and instead of hearing grumbling you hear people celebrating the goodness of God. And speech about one another is kind and uplifting and edifying and beneficial and merciful and forgiving and patient, always assuming the best, covering over sin and celebrating what is good. We don’t want Him to come back and find us grumbling against one another.

Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Hebrews 10:25 ... let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Patience that is not governed by love for one another is not patience. There is no such thing as unloving patience. Love cares about others; impatience cares about self.⁷

God Hates Grumbling

Are there some sins in the Bible that are described as being more heinous, more damaging, more scandalous than other sins? Yes, I believe there are. But if we made a list of the most scandalous sins, I think our list might not look the same as God’s. Because one sin that would be way up near the top of God’s list would be grumbling, and I doubt that would make anywhere on most people’s list of scandalous sins. I have never heard of a pastor or a politician who had to step down because he got caught grumbling. And yet in the eyes of God, grumbling is one of the especially heinous sins. In Numbers 16 the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron and God was so infuriated that He killed 14,700 of them. And He was going to kill a lot more, but Moses and Aaron interceded and prayed for the people, and God relented. Fourteen thousand seven hundred Israelites got the death penalty because they grumbled.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul warns us about four really scandalous sins – sexual perversion, idolatry, testing God, and grumbling. God hates grumbling, and you do not want to be found to be a grumbler when Jesus returns.

Conclusion: Loving God’s Judgment

How does all of that make you feel about God? Does it make you feel distant from Him, since He is a dangerous, threatening judge? Does it make you resent Him a little bit? Or does it make you love Him more? If we saw this warning through the lenses of clear, undistorted glasses, we would love what we saw. It would make us love Him more.

It would increase our emotional delight in Him.

It is a bad thing to have a judge who is against you, or who doesn’t care about you. But it is a wonderful thing to have a judge who is also your father. A judge who knows right and wrong better than you do, and who loves you so much that He will not let you destroy yourself by going the wrong way. A judge who has promised that all of his judgments in your case will benefit you and profit you. Is it scary? Yes. It’s a little scary to go in and see your dad after you have been disobedient, and you are heading off

⁷ I have found that my biggest weakness in the area of patience is acting on impulse, which is fundamentally a violation of love. I get an idea and that same moment I want to push ahead with implementing it. Even though it took me six months to develop this idea, I expect everyone around me to come to the same conclusion in one day. And so I’m pushing everyone to come along before they are ready, and I try to put the idea in place before there is proper planning, which makes it disorganized and prone to failure, and that causes exasperation for everyone around me. In recent years I have been learning - If God gives me a great idea, that’s great. But I am not following His will unless I wait on His timing and His pace for the implementation of the idea.

to the woodshed with him. But that is a whole lot better than having an absentee father. It is a whole lot better than having a dad who doesn't care about you one way or the other. It is a lot better than having a dad who disciplines out of anger regardless of what is best for you. It is better than having a judge who cares about the law but does not care about you.

The goodness and rightness of the judgments of God are a delight to His people. I don't want a wimpy, weak, pathetic god whose warnings can be safely ignored. My soul longs to be awed. I long to be under the authority and care of someone vastly stronger than me. I want a God like this:

Psalm 50:1 The Mighty One, God, Yahweh, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets. 2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. 3 Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages. 4 He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people: 5 "Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice." 6 And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for God himself is judge.

"But if God is going to come and judge me in righteousness, won't I be annihilated?"

14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, 15 and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." 16 But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips?"

It is not going to be the same for us on Judgment Day as it will be for the wicked. They will be punished to the full extent of what their sins deserve, because they can make no appeal to any covenant with God. But it will be different for us. We do have a covenant with God. Those of us who know and love and trust the Lord Jesus Christ will not have to suffer the wrath of God or the eternal punishment that our sins deserve. Will we have to give an account? Yes. Will that be a big deal? Yes – enough of a big deal that the fear of it should be a powerful motivation for us to walk in obedience. But as frightening and sobering as it is to think about giving an account to a holy God for our disobedience, and to receive what is due us for the deeds done in the body whether good or bad, still, we look forward to that day and long for that day more than anything else in the world because the righteous judge is our Lord and Savior and we long to see Him in His full glory. And so we live in Him, delight in Him, praise Him and fear Him - all at the same time.

Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song ... 9 ...tremble before him, all the earth. 10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. 11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; 12 let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; 13 they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

Benediction: 1 Timothy 6:15 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Describe a time when someone corrected you in a way that inspired and encouraged rather than discouraged you.
- 2) Which situations do you find yourself most tempted to grumble against others: a) When they hurt you, b) When they do a poor job in ministry, c) When they sin?

- 3) Of the various peacemaking ingredients mentioned in James 4:17, which do you feel the most need to improve in?
- 4) Does anticipation of Judgment Day have a conscious impact on your behavior on a daily basis?
- 5) In which areas do you feel the most need to strengthen your heart so that it is not double minded?