

Dr. Bert Jones • North Carolina Capitol Commission • Bert.Jones@capitolcom.org

In the last lesson, we talked about being stewards of God's wealth for His glory. The opening portion of James 5 expresses a stern warning to those who would oppress others by cheating them and using the ill-gotten gains to selfishly indulge themselves. How rich or poor we are in eternity will have nothing to do with earthly riches that will pass away. It will depend on the spiritual condition of our hearts - "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matthew 6:21).

In the next section of the chapter, James addresses those who are suffering with the words, "*be patient*" (v.7). The book of James opens by teaching patience in suffering, and this is again in primary view as the book comes near closing. There are many wrongs in this sinful world. Everything will not be made right until Christ returns. The mature believer recognizes this, and proceeds through life with patience and perseverance.

Three times James reminds us of the coming of the Lord (v. 7-9). For the believer, this is the "*blessed hope*" (Titus 2:13). Maturity brings understanding that we must endure hardships and sufferings until Christ returns. He said, "*In this world, you shall have tribulation*" (John 16:33). But, in the rest of the verse He comforts us, "*but take courage, for I have overcome the world*". Through Christ, we are also overcomers (conquerors) and more (Romans 8:37).

In this passage, James uses two Greek words for patience. In verses 7-8, 10, it is the word for being *long tempered*. In verse 11, the thought is "*to remain under*" or "*standing fast when you want to run away*". Many Greek scholars think that *longsuffering* refers to patience with people while *endurance* refers more to patience with situations or conditions.

James gives three examples of patient endurance. The first is the farmer (v. 7-9). The fruit of his labor does not appear right away. Meanwhile, he has no control over the weather or some other important factors related to the crop's success. But for "*precious*" (v. 7) fruit, the crop is worth waiting for. The mature believer is as a "spiritual farmer" waiting for a spiritual harvest. To do so, one's heart must be established (v. 8).

Our hearts are the soil and "*the seed is the Word of God*" (Luke 8:11). Like the soil, our spiritual lives have seasons. Sometimes the Lord has to "plow" hardened hearts before seed can be planted and thrive. We need the sunshine and rains of life. These nourish the seeds in our heart that we might yield good fruit at the proper time.

The farmer does not lazily do nothing while he waits. He is constantly at work. We are to work while we wait. Successful farmers tend to help one another also (note 5:9).

A second example of patient endurance is found in God's prophets (v. 10). Christ also used them as an example of victory over persecution in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:10-12). Elijah is just one example we will discuss later in the chapter. Many prophets endured great trials and sufferings.

Thirdly, James references the sufferings of Job (v. 11-12) and his perseverance. The book of Job is a tremendous lesson in suffering and patience. It addresses many wrong views regarding suffering that have always dwelt within sinful man. In that book, we learn about God's righteous character and our utter dependence on Him for every blessing.

Trials have differing specific purposes, but the ultimate purpose is the glory of God. We often may not understand, but the mature believer knows that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Satan wants us to be impatient with God, ourselves and others. Impatience can lead to bad decisions and consequences. But we can always go with confidence to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

James 5

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged

⁵ Now listen, *you* rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon *you*! ² Your riches are ruined, and the moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Indeed the wages you failed to pay the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered righteous men who offered no resistance to you.

Be Patient and Persevering

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rains. ⁸ You also be patient. Stand firm and strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

⁹ Do not complain against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ My brethren, as an example of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Indeed, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome *intended* by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

¹² But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and *your* "No," "No," or you will be condemned.

Meeting Specific Needs

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Bring Back the Erring One

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone should bring him back, ²⁰ remember this, that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Memory Verse

"In this world you shall have tribulation, but take courage, for I have overcome the world".

(John 16:33)