



# The Power of Patience

James 5:7-12

## Exhortation

- ❑ Read James 5:7-11. James exhorts<sup>1</sup> his readers: “be patient” (5:7a, 8a) and “strengthen your hearts” (5:8a).<sup>2</sup> The “therefore” in verse 7 connects this passage to the previous verses (5:1-6) which speak about the rich oppressing the poor. Many of James’ readers were the ones being oppressed by the rich, so they would benefit from these exhortations.

## Expectation

- ❑ James says, “be patient... strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near.” (5:8).
  1. How could knowledge of the “Lord’s coming” encourage them to be patient? In what sense is the Lord’s coming “near?”<sup>3</sup>

## Examples

James provides three examples of patience and/or perseverance.

- ❑ The Farmer (5:7c)
  2. Why does the farmer have to be patient?<sup>4</sup> Why is the farmer willing to wait?
  3. How do the seasons of farming compare with the seasons of life? How are Christians like spiritual farmers?



- 📖 “A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (*Galatians 6:7b-9, NIV*)

- ❑ The Prophets (5:10)
  4. Do you think our suffering is due to unfaithfulness to God or faithfulness to Him, or both?<sup>5</sup> Explain.

<sup>1</sup> ‘To exhort’ means ‘to urge or advise strongly.’ ‘Exhortation’ is the noun form of this word.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Patience’ may be defined as ‘the ability to bear pain, trouble, waiting, boredom, etc. and at the same time keep calm and not complain’ (*Webster’s New World Basic Dictionary*, 1998). ‘Strengthen your hearts’ is related to perseverance in the face of difficulties and trials.

<sup>3</sup> We do not know when the Lord will return, but His coming is certain and it could happen very soon. Thus the Bible instructs Christians to live as if the Lord could come at any time. When He comes, He will set things right. Thus James instructs his readers to avoid grumbling against each other for ‘the judge stands at the door!’ (5:9)

<sup>4</sup> In Palestine, it rains heaviest in the winter months, and is extremely dry during the summer. The ‘early rains’ (in October-November) help soften the soil for plowing, sowing, and initial watering. The ‘late rains’ (in March-April) are necessary for a good harvest (Deuteronomy 11:14). The farmer hopes and waits for favorable conditions.

<sup>5</sup> The prophets ‘spoke in the name of the Lord’ and suffered because of it. For example, Jeremiah was arrested as a traitor and thrown into a well to die. Daniel was thrown into a lion’s den. See 2 Timothy 3:12.

- 5. What does God promise to the Christian who perseveres through persecution and suffering? (*Consider 5:11; 1:12; 1:2-4*)

📖 *Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12, NIV).*

**Application:** As James’ original readers could be encouraged by the prophets’ examples, we can be encouraged by the examples found in both the Bible and church history. Read about them.

☐ Job (5:11)<sup>6</sup>

Job was a righteous and wealthy man. However, he lost his wealth, health, and family (except his wife, who told him to curse God and die). It seemed like everything and everybody was against him. But Job persevered in his faith in God, and grew to know God more deeply (*Job 42:1-6*). Eventually, God blessed Job even more than before (*42:10-17*).

**Enablement**

- ☐ Being patient can be difficult! Sometimes it’s hard to stand firm. But God helps His children. “The Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (*5:11*).



📖 God told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you ...” (*2 Corinthians 12:9*)

📖 “...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, *patience*, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (*Galatians 5:22-23, emphasis added*).

**Summary:**

Exhortation	Be patient; Strengthen your heart; Persevere
Expectation	Christ’s Coming
Examples	1. Farmer – Patience → Blessing 2. Prophets – Endured persecution → Blessing 3. Job – Persevered through suffering → Blessing
Enablement	God’s Grace, Indwelling Holy Spirit

**Application:** Are you struggling with patience or perseverance? If so, in what area is your struggle? What is your goal? Is it somehow related to God’s plan and purpose? If not, submit everything to God. Trust in Christ, pray, and reflect on this lesson. God blesses His children.

**One More Exhortation**

- ☐ Read James 5:12. James exhorts his readers, “do not swear<sup>7</sup>... Your ‘yes’ must be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ must be ‘no’...” In other words, let *all* of your speech be truthful and trustworthy. Your speech *should not* need qualification.

<sup>6</sup> We might not think of Job as a good example of patience. However, though he was frustrated and complained, he never abandoned his faith in God (*Job 1:21-22; 2:10; 16:19-21; 19:25-27*). Thus he is an example of ‘perseverance.’  
<sup>7</sup> ‘swear’ – to invoke the name of God or something sacred to ensure the truthfulness of what one says (that is, to take or utter an oath). Compare to *Matthew 5:33-37*.