

The unfolding of your words gives light.

Faith That Works

An Exposition of the Book of James

⁷Therefore be patient, brethren^a, until the coming of the Lord^b. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it^c, until it gets the early and late rains^d. ⁸You too be patient; strengthen your hearts^e, for the coming of the Lord is near^f. ⁹Do not complain, brethren, against one another^g, so that you yourselves may not

^a **5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren.** The word “therefore” connects this passage with the previous one about “rich people.” What do the two have to do with each other? One possibility is that believers enduring hardship can take heart that the things they lack materially do not last long anyway. James addressed the rich not because they would be the primary recipients of his letter but as a comfort to the persecuted. Now he addresses the temptations of his persecuted “brethren.” This passage most certainly addresses believers because unbelievers are not motivated by the promise that Jesus is coming back to set things straight.

^b **5:7 until the coming of the Lord.** This statement could refer to the return of Jesus Christ to judge those who mistreated the recipients of this letter. It is tempting to interpret “the coming of the Lord” as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem that likely occurred shortly after James penned this letter. The trouble with that interpretation is that the word “coming” usually refers to someone’s physical presence and—specifically—the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the ages. James urges patience (longsuffering) so the people would not take revenge into their own hands against their rich oppressors.

^c **5:7 The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it.** This is the first of two primary words for “patience” used in this passage. This one means to suffer long, to be long-winded instead of short-tempered.

^d **5:7 until it gets the early and late rains.** The newly sown fall seed in Israel needed rain in October or November and the maturing plants needed rain in April or May. Farmers relied on God’s timely supply of rain for their livelihood and God promised to send it as long as the nation followed his commands.

For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year. It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Deuteronomy 11:10-15

^e **5:8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts.** James uses a word translated “strengthen” that means “to make stable.” When you do not handle hard times well, your whole life (your heart) becomes turbulent. James says there is stability in preparing for the future. He is giving practical advice for that preparation.

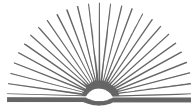
^f **5:8 for the coming of the Lord is near.** This is the same word for “near” John used when he said “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Near does not mean we will live to see it, but it does mean it is coming.

^g **5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another.** Literally translated, “Stop grumbling...” The word “complain” means “to groan or sigh” and is not necessarily bad in itself (Romans 8:26 says the Spirit does this when He intercedes for us). The trouble with this type of groaning is that *it is directed at others*. People have unpleasant things happen and often look around for

James 5.07-11
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.



The unfolding of your words gives light.

be judged^a; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door^b. ¹⁰As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord^c. ¹¹We count those blessed who endured^d. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings^e, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful^f.^g

someone to blame instead of responding in a godly way. We far too easily turn opportunities to grow our relationships into moments of angry words.

^a 5:9 **so that you yourselves may not be judged.** This is one of several similarities between this passage and the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." James' commentary substitutes "grumble against each other" as amounting to the same thing as judging. People who have trained themselves to turn stressful moments into angry moments rob God of his perfecting work in his people. Remember James 1:2-4.

^b 5:9 **behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.** Jesus used similar language in Matthew 24:33. This text compares our ability to look around and observe the seasons to our ability to know the "season" when Jesus will return.

^c 5:10 **As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.** The Bible records many instances of God's representatives facing hostile crowds. People like Elijah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who spoke the truth under threat of violence, serve as our pattern. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10).

^d 5:11 **We count those blessed who endured.** This is a form of the word Jesus used in the beatitudes recorded in Matthew 5:1-12. It means "happy." "Endured" is the second "patience" word used in this passage. A. T. Robertson distinguishes the two like this: the first is "restraint from retaliating" and this one is "not easily succumbing."

^e 5:11 **You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings.** Literally, "You have seen the end of the Lord," i.e., "You have seen the way the Lord finishes things." It is always best to let your Master finish the fights others pick with you.

^f 5:11 **that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.** Rehearsing this statement keeps you from supposing that God is out to get you or your children. Hard times are his gift like the pain of some medical procedures are a gift. He is good and what he does is good.

^g 5:7-11 What does a man facing the death penalty for being a Christian have in common with a man who has chronic problems with his lawn mower? Few of us in free nations know what it would be like to live under oppressive persecution by powerful people, not knowing whether we will live or die. We also do not know what it would be like to have our survival depend on whether or not it rains on our crops. But the same principles apply to our minimal hardships as they do to life-threatening hardships. Here James draws yet another metaphor, comparing believers enduring hardship to farmers waiting for rain. He tells us how to occupy our time while we wait for God to deliver us from evil or even from little hassles:

1. Get your thinking under control. Strengthening your heart involves thinking true thoughts. The farmer strengthens his heart by saying, "It is going to rain. That is what happens this times of year." The heart is only weakened by statements of despair like, "But what if this year is the exception?"
2. Love those around you. Some people show anger in hard times toward the very people they should be serving. The look around for someone to blame for their discomfort. The Judge standing at the door knows this is the time to serve instead of grumble.
3. Rehearse the attributes of God. How has he acted in the past? What do you know for sure about him?

James 5.07-11
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

©Rice Lake Baptist Church, 104 East Barker Street, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, 54868 – <http://www.ricelakebaptist.org> – 715.234.1966

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and that you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.