

Patient Suffering ...

James shifts his focus in verses 7 to 11 from the abusive rich and persecutors of the poor to those who are persecuted, the abused poor – those abused spiritually and physically. They are to suffer in patience for their trials with grow them spiritually and prepare them for the return of Christ. Jesus told his followers, **“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”** (John 16:33)

Paul echoed the words of Christ when he warned the believers in Galatia, **“through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”** (Acts 14:22) Paul told Timothy that suffering for the gospel is to be expected as a normal part of a believer’s life, writing, ¹²**“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”** (v.12-13) One is to expect persecution and understand through the Word of God how one is to deal with it. Someone asked C.S. Lewis, “Why do the righteous suffer?” “Why not?” Lewis replied. “They're the only ones who can take it.”

Paul continues with his advice to Timothy in verse 14, **“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** (2 Timothy 3:12-15) Once someone has been brought to spiritual life and indwelt with the Holy Spirit the Word of God makes one **“wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** There is a cost for being a believer in Jesus as the Christ sent by God the Father; in addition to the normal trails that come with life, believers face trails

not experienced by non-believers – persecution for one’s faith. The world is hostile to the truth of God.

The Nicene Council was called in 325 AD bringing church leaders together to codify Christian doctrine. These leaders had suffered much and were persecuted at the hands of the world. Of the 318 delegates who traveled great distances to attend, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

These men were an example of those Jesus taught about in his Sermon on the Mount, ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12) Israel rebuked, abused and killed God’s prophets of the Old Testament. John the Baptist was the last prophet of the old covenant and he declared the new covenant had arrived. His faithful preaching of God’s truths cost him his head. John new faithfulness to God and eternity far outweighed this world. One might want to take a moment and sit back to consider, if there is no spiritual warfare or persecution in your life by the world and those serving the prince of this world – should one ask, “Is it because I am no threat to Satan and therefore he leaves me alone?” It amazes me that those who suffer little need God little. Helen Keller who certainly would have cause, according to the world’s reasoning, to feel God did not love her because of her suffering said, “Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.” Being blind and deaf did not stop her from loving God and serving him with hope of eternity.

If we are living for the glory of Christ, he says to each of us, ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose

you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ... ²⁰ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ... ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’ ... I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ... ² Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. (John 15:18-16:2) I am old but not that old, in my life time, I have seen the environment change from one that respected the church even if one was not a believer to this day where our society disrespects those who live the scriptures, those who live the standards of God and those who separate themselves from the low standards of the world. The separation from the fallen world and from the broad church that does not hold fast the God’s Word will continue to widen and be a greater challenge to our children and their children as history prepares for the return of the King. We must prepare our children to be strong in the Word of God, we must prepare for battle – not as the world defines battle, but as God outlines our battle in His Word.

This means, as Paul wrote, hold fast to “[the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.](#)” (Ephesians 6:17) It also means to have patience and wait upon Christ’s return with an expectation that it may happen each day. Living each day as if the Lord is returning gives us the desire to live the day well and the willingness to suffer the world’s persecution for our promise of eternity with God just as John the Baptist.

... Endures Until Christ’s Return

Three times in the first three verses of this short passage James writes of our great hope in the return of our Lord and King. Look with me beginning in verse 7, “[Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.](#) See how the farmer waits

for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for **the coming of the Lord** is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the **Judge is standing at the door.**” (James 5:7-9)

Jesus talked a lot about his return in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, in Mark 13 and Luke 21. He also taught that signs would precede his return. As Jesus sat with his disciples, they asked him how would they know “**the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**” Jesus responded, “**See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.**” (Matthew 24:3-8)

Every generation has lived in the expectation of Jesus’ return. We are to read Matthew, Mark, Luke in order to know the signs of the End of the Age. In order to have a better understanding we then need to also read Daniel, Zephaniah, Thessalonians and Revelation. We observe the world and think how much worst can it get before Christ returns. I can tell you it will get worst, but I cannot tell when he will return. Jesus said, ⁴² “**... stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**” (Matthew 24:42-44) We can know the season of Christ’s return, surely when one studies the Bible and observes the world we are in the season. But we are not sure how long the season is. Be ready and live life as if Jesus will return this day.

Paul wrote to encourage the believers in Philippi, ¹² “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13) Believers were not to show works of faith only while Paul was with them but more importantly while he was gone and they were to live as Christ modeled. They were to be witnesses of Christ to the world. Paul is not here; Jesus has returned to heaven until his coming – what are we to do until he returns? As recorded in Acts, Peter declared, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” ... ⁴² Jesus “commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.” (Acts 10:34-35, 42) Let me ask, How are you doing at being obedient to Christ’s command that you are to preach and give testimony of what Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me!” (John 14:6) Christ’s soon return gives us peace and comfort as we live in this chaotic and fallen world. The promise of spending eternity in the presence of God is a blessing beyond anything we could hope for and yet it is true. But, as we read in 2 Timothy 4 and Acts 10 we also understand Jesus will come as the “judge of the living and the dead.” This should spur us into action of good works and sharing the gospel of good news that Jesus saves. The alternative is a horrible eternity “for unbelievers and the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8) If we help people see there are only these two alternatives it then makes them responsible. Remember earlier we read John 15:22 where Jesus said, ²² “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” Jesus has shown himself to the world. We are not responsible for what others believe, but we

are response to share the gospel in order that the truth has been placed before them. Be obedient and trust in God for the results and proclaim the gospel until his return.

James ends verse 9 with, “[the Judge is standing at the door.](#)” Jesus will return in God’s timing, but we need to know that he stands ready to throw open the door to pour out the wrath of God on the unrepentant and rapture the redeemed to eternity and the end of history. As Paul wrote to encourage the church in Thessalonica, ¹⁵“[For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.](#)” If we have died before Jesus’ return we will be at his second coming and if we are alive when he returns Christ will raise us up to him. Paul continues, ¹⁶“[For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.](#)” ¹⁷“[Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.](#)” ¹⁸“[Therefore encourage one another with these words.](#)” (1 Thessalonica 4:15-18) My beloved is this not worth the suffering and persecution of this world? I say, yes and Amen!

... Produces Blessings

Now we come to the close of this powerful message, a message with ramifications both in on earth and for eternity. James wants those of the Jerusalem church to know that their suffering at the hands of the Jewish nation’s leaders is not in vain and they are not alone. As we read verses 10 and 11 we know it was true at the time James wrote, it has been true throughout the history of mankind for the almost 2000 years since Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection and it is true this day for each of us who has ear to hear the Word of God. James writes, ¹⁰“[As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.](#)”

¹¹“[Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the](#)

steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” Paul wrote of his own suffering and how suffering produced fruit for the kingdom of God. Reading from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, “I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—⁶ though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.” It would have been understandable for Paul to become conceited and boastful. Paul had been saved by Christ himself, he had received revelations from Christ, planted churches and seen much success in his ministry. Paul refused to boast as others had done even though he had suffered²³ “far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) Despite all of Paul’s accomplishments and surviving many trials he was a man of humility because of his dependence on Christ. Now we go back to Paul’s writing in chapter 12 where he says he is blessed with suffering⁷ “to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.⁹ But he *Christ* said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults,

hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:5-10) When one reads of the prophets of the Old and New Testaments they see that the blessings of God do not come to men who do great things in their own effort, but to those who are humble and obedient to the Word of God and endure to the end. These are those who have understood God’s purpose for their lives and the character of the God they serve. We should live God’s will and purpose with humility and with the goal of eternity.

... Has Purpose

James knew the prophets and he knew the disciples of his half-brother Jesus. It may have been the Holy Spirit revealing to James the prophets testimony of who the Messiah would be or allowing James to witness Jesus after his resurrection or it may have been the work and suffering of the disciples of Christ that brought James into awareness and submission to God, but these would be the work of the Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who worked in James – he became a man of humility like Paul but also a man with a mission for the glory of Christ. So James related here in the second half of verse 11, “You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord...” James is writing to a Jewish audience that has come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. So he reminds them of the story of Job, a story known by all Jews. Job endured sufferings; attacks directly by Satan, the lost of his children, wealth, health, reputation and a wife who told him to give up and die. As bad as all these sufferings were they were not as devastating as being separated from God’s presence. Through all of this suffering he did not sin because his hope was in God. Job says, “Though He God slay me, yet will I trust Him.” (Job 13:15) Job was a great encouragement to James and his Jewish audience, and he is a great encouragement to us. Yes, he suffered as a test of his faith and he was proven faithful. He suffered to see if Satan could destroy his faith in the unseen God and yet, Job proved faithful. God used Job’s suffering to

strengthen his faith and to enable him to understand and see God with greater clarity. Through Job's suffering and losses, because he endured in his faith he received greater blessings than before.

My beloved if you are suffering, be encouraged by both Job and James for they demonstrate that you will be strengthened spiritually. If you endure and stay strong in your faith, you will be humbled and better able to serve the Lord. Grab hold of what Paul wrote in Romans 8 - know and believe, ²⁶ “the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. ... ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:26,28) What is the purpose of God in our lives? The purpose of God often develops slowly because his grand designs are never hurried. The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. However, even he suffered moments of frustration. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. “What’s the trouble, Mr. Brooks?” he asked. Brooks replied, “The trouble is that I’m in a hurry, but God isn’t!” Haven’t we felt the same way?

We find God’s purpose throughout the scriptures and what brings his purpose into focus is when we approach life and the scriptures as Jesus commanded, “...*you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” (Mark 12:30) Approaching the Bible as the inspired words of God that we accept, work to understand and live is the right way to seek his purpose for your life. To pray to God seeking his purpose for your life and decisions means the path will be consistent with his Word and then having the courage to live as he directs.

James ends in verse 11 by telling us “the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” The Greek word used here and translated as “compassionate” is used only here in the Bible. The Greek word literally translates, as “inner parts” where we get the concept the heart is the seat of emotions. The Lord then has “inner parts” or a heart

with the capacity of compassion beyond man's imagination. James carried this theme of God having an unlimited ability for compassion and mercy that he found throughout the Old Testament. Psalm 86, a prayer of David, says in verse 13, "For great *is* Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol." Mercy is found 845 times in the Bible with 2/3s in the Old Testament. The righteous suffering of His children brings compassion and mercy from God. David wrote a truth inspired by God and from his heart, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good ..." (Psalm 103:2-5)

The bottom line is we are to expect persecution and suffering if we are living the gospel of Christ. We can endure these trials because we live in anticipation of Christ's return. We recognize God's plan will not be deterred by the evil of the world and the suffering of his children serves a purpose. We are to endure until the end as testimony to Christ's strength in us and our love for Him. We can shout from our hearts the words of David, "Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Psalm 30:4-5) God you are forever faithful, may you strengthen us to live faithfully to You. Jesus said we are to "... love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30) May it be so! Amen!