

## FAITH IN ACTION IS PATIENT IN SUFFERING

**Greetings:** Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, commends and even blesses those who will be and have been persecuted for righteousness sake. *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* **Matthew 5:10** And, He gives special acknowledgment to the Old Testament prophets who endured such sufferings for the sake of God. Jesus enjoins His hearers to *Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* **Matthew 5:12** Jesus was not the only teacher of the New Testament who taught such a concept. His brother James instructs his readers to *Consider it all joy...when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (patience). And let endurance (patience) have its perfect result.* **James 1:2-4** This joy in trials with patience to produce perfection is a major theme of this book and we see this idea come up again in James 5.

**JAMES 5:7-12** Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup> You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. <sup>9</sup> Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. <sup>10</sup> As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. <sup>12</sup> But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment.

Moving further into chapter 5, we shift from discussing the “greedy rich” oppressors to the oppressed. Here, we look at right action amidst hardship: What does it look like? What virtue is needed in these times? And what does living this way look like for us? Today, we will talk about the virtue of patience, examples of perseverance and suffering, and a reminder of being mindful of the tongue which reminisces of Lesson 6. Sometimes, the “Just Do It!” notion of faith means actually waiting, enduring, and (the final lesson) praying. Our Lord, who is full of compassion and mercy, is near and will one day make all things right. But for us in the present, we joyfully accept that *Faith in Action is Patient in Suffering*.

### THE UNDERGIRDING OF PATIENCE (FOR OUR MATURITY)

- Patience is a virtue.
  - We aren't talking about grocery store line or at a red light patience (though those are also good times to practice patience).
  - Although the word patient {*makrothumeo*} can have the simple idea of “waiting” or being “long-tempered,” here it is used synonymously with {*hupomone*}, “patience/endurance/perseverance.”

- Patience/long-tempered is used 25 times in the N.T. and is the word James uses in **5:7-8, 10**. *Love is patient. 1 Corinthians 13:4* This patience is typically associated with “one another.”
  - Patience/endurance/perseverance {*hupomone*} is used 49 times in the N.T. and 5 times in James. **1:3,4,12; 5:11** This “perseverance” is primarily used in respect to conditions or situations.
  - Today’s context is about the patience needed by righteous people who are abused by the rich and powerful ungodly people in the world. It is long-term endurance, the end of which will come when Jesus returns, when your spiritual “precious produce” will be harvested.
  - Patience is a virtue, one that is a byproduct of living in unity with the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-24**
- Patience is used in our refining (metallurgy) process.
    - Patience amidst oppression produces perseverance. **1:2-4**
    - This is part of God’s refining process within us, shaping us to maturity {*telion*}.
    - As we face trials, patience should be our mode of operation.
    - “Patient endurance can sustain itself on the convictions that hardships are not meaningless, but that God has some end or purpose in them which he will accomplish.” (Moffatt)
    - Patience, one of the great themes of this letter, intends to let us have its complete effect— maturity, completion, perfection!
- ❖ What does patient endurance look like? Can you think of examples of this today?

## BEHOLD, EXAMPLES OF PATIENCE (IN SUFFERING)

- The patience of farmers. **5:7**
  - Without the early rains, the seed would not germinate. Without the late rains, the grain would not mature. Be patient, and let God do His work.
  - The farmer, therefore, depends on the rain. No rain—no crop. But who provides the rain? **Deuteronomy 11:14**
  - The farmer waits because the fruit is precious (it’s worth waiting for).
  - Remember, God is producing a harvest in our lives.
- The persecution of prophets. **5:10**
  - The prophets were men who knew how to wait on the Lord. **Micah 7:7; Hosea 12:6; Isaiah 64:4**
  - The prophets were also known for their endurance in the midst of persecution. **Matthew 5:10-12, 23:34-35; Hebrews 11:32-40**
  - Like the prophets, we too keep waiting— and witnessing; persevering *under trial*, being *faithful until death*, and we *will receive the crown of life*. **1:12; Revelation 2:10**



- Remember, we can rejoice {*charein*} and are blessed when we encounter various trials.
- The perseverance of Job.      **5:11**
  - Job's persevering through suffering paved the way for Jesus. We learn that suffering (that God allows) is not in vain and has a purpose.
  - Job blessed the name of the LORD (**Job 1:21**) in his calamity and continued to place his hope in Him (**Job 13:15**), knowing that his Advocate was on high (**Job 16:19**) and most importantly, as Job states, *I know that my Redeemer lives (Job 19:25)*.
  - We can read of the outcome/end/{*telion*} of the Lord's dealings and know for ourselves the Lord's compassion and mercy.
  - Remember, one of the purposes of suffering is the building of our character.
- ❖ In your spiritual walk with patience, do you relate more to the farmer, the prophets, or Job? How?

## USING PATIENCE WITH OUR TONGUE (TO AVOID JUDGMENT)

- The critical nature of complaining.      **5:9**
  - Being ungrateful or frustrated with circumstances or people has happened for a long time. Our call to live patiently doesn't stop with our oppressors; it extends to one another. **Colossians 3:13**
  - When suffering or under *pressure*, "Do not let your irritation and soreness at outside oppression vent itself in impatience and grumbling towards one another." (Dummelow)
  - One of the defiling sins of the tongue found in the book of James is that of complaining. We will be held accountable in the day of judgment for every careless word spoken. **Matthew 12:36**
- Intentionality with our words.      **5:12**
  - James makes almost an exact quote to something Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount. **Matthew 5:33-37**
  - This "swearing" deals more with oath-taking than it does with cursing. The Jews were careful not to use the name of God in their oaths, so they used vernacular of other 'weighted' things. However, all of it connected to God the Creator nonetheless. Therefore, simply be honest! Yes means yes and No means no.
  - Dishonesty and verbal trickery in our commitments is sinful and will fall under judgment.
- ❖ How can we become non-complainers? And be people that let our yes be yes and no, no? In what contexts today might this instruction be challenging to us?



### **Additional Discussion Questions:**

- ❖ How can we come alongside others who are patiently enduring their trials?
- ❖ One of the examples used is a farmer. What can a farmer control? What can he not control? Does a farmer work while he waits?
- ❖ How do you strengthen/make firm your heart in times of trial?
- ❖ The only time Job is mentioned in the New Testament is in the book of James. What do you think is the purpose of his mention in chapter 5?
- ❖ Are there people you can name who are patient amidst suffering? What are some ways in which they have endured?
- ❖ What does God accomplish in Christians through suffering?
- ❖ Is there a relationship between lacking endurance/patience and “groaning against each other”? (Cf **4:11-12**)
- ❖ In what ways might living a life speaking honestly be challenging to us today? How can we be more intentional about what we say?

### **Prayer**

