

Patience in Suffering (James 5:7-12)

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Who amongst us would ask to be granted the patience of Job? To sit upon a “dunghill”¹ of unimaginable suffering and pain and yet cry out “blessed be the name of the Lord” for though “He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;”² is a testimony of patience, love and faith for God that eternally rings loud and clear! Is it not easier though to question our sovereign God³ when tribulations threaten to crush our souls than to “find strength in helplessness, joy in submission, rest in resignation, heaven in a full surrender to His will”⁴ If God were to ask you to enter into a “furnace of infliction”⁵ so that your faith might be proven and your spirit refined like that of pure gold,⁶ would you say yes? When you are enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season”⁷ would you receive the rod of His wrath with thanksgiving in your heart? Should you be called to be persecuted for righteousness sake would you be the first to say, though the gates of hell be brought near,⁸ I will fear no evil but will rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer for His name’s sake? The following sermon is going to suggest that it is possible and even spiritually advantageous for Christians to be patient and rejoice in our Lord during the greatest storms of suffering in our lives!

Before one can truly understand James teaching on patience one must first understand the dire circumstances of the Christians who lived outside of Palestine.⁹ The first source of suffering were the rich who were oppressing the poor.¹⁰ While James denounced those who acquired or

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 331.

² C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 291.

³ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up James](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 151–152.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 329.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 330.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 331.

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 331.

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 332.

⁹ Mark Allen Powell, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 2009, 449.

¹⁰ Sophie Laws, [“James, Epistle of,”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 623.



preserved riches at the expense of others,¹¹ his advice to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion¹² was to patiently bear their economic suffering by boasting that in their low, earthly position they would one day be made eternally rich! The second source of suffering was due to their belief in but one God. Even though the Jews lived during the peaceful time of the famous Pax Romana, daily they faced persecution for not worshipping the plethora of Roman gods and the

emperor! The Christians of the Dispersion were suffering so intensely that they started to project their anger and hostility onto the members of their own church communities!¹³ In response James encouraged them to “keep steady under provocation,”¹⁴ faithful to God in tribulations and above all patiently wait until the Lord returns and corrects all injustices.¹⁵ The remainder to the sermon is going to “dive into” how to remain patient in three critical areas of our lives: with one another, in the face of persecution and during tribulations, so that we might be found faithful upon the Lord’s return!

Patience with Fellow Believers (verse 7,9)

Christians are not just to be patient with outsiders who persecute them they especially need to be patient with those inside the church who “grate” on their every nerve!¹⁶ When we suffer against situations of which we have no control¹⁷ or with people far more powerful than us we tend to take out our frustrations on those closest to us!¹⁸ According to James the fact that the Christians of the Dispersion did not have their worldly desires satisfied had become a source of much quarreling, fighting, grumbling and outright, harsh judgment amongst the brothers and

¹¹ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 226.

¹² Mark Allen Powell, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 2009, 446.

¹³ Peter H. Davids, *James*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 119.

¹⁴ Peter H. Davids, *James*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 118.

¹⁵ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 226.

¹⁶ Donald W. Burdick, “James,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 202.

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000), 224.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000), 224.



sisters in Christ (4:1-3).¹⁹ As Christians we are to forbear one another (Colossians 3:13) and in seeing the image of God in our brothers and sisters (James 3:19) we are to keep no records of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5) but instead look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). To grumble and fight with fellow believers not only ruins our witness of God’s love²⁰ to the world but James says invites judgement upon us, for in the manner we judge others we too will be judged (Matthew

7:1-12)!²¹ Like the Christians of James day when we fight, grumble and harshly judge our brothers and sisters we must not forget that this disobedience will soon be judged by the One²² who is about to return (Revelation 22:20).²³

Patience in the Face of Persecution - Prophets (Verse 10)

When it came to patience amidst persecution James stated his fellow believers are to look to the example of the prophets who were able to faithfully declare the word of God despite being persecuted and facing death!²⁴ One



example of great patience was Moses. He wandered in the wilderness and had to endure a complaining and grumbling people and yet remained their leader, deeply in love with them and God! Another example was Daniel who was thrown in the lion’s den because he defied Darius’ edict to stop worshipping God for thirty days (Daniel 6). Then there was Zechariah who “sealed his testimony with his blood” and was put to death in the

¹⁹ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 228.

²⁰ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up James*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 152.

²¹ Peter H. Davids, *James*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 119.

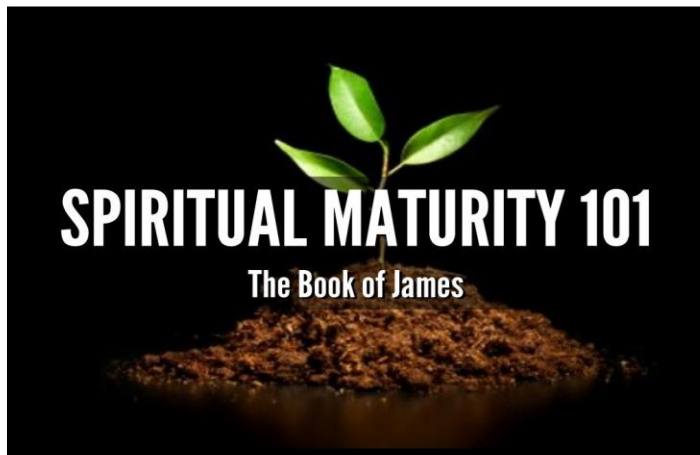
²² Peter H. Davids, *James*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 119.

²³ Douglas J. Moo, *“The Letters and Revelation,”* in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2233.

²⁴ Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up James*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 154.

temple (2 Chronicles 24:20–22).²⁵ Who could ever forget Elijah’s faithfulness to God who was chased by Jezebel who wanted him dead for executing 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)? Then there is Isaiah who never stopped sharing God’s prophecies even though tradition has it that this led to him being sawed in two.²⁶ And finally who could ever forget the patience of the “weeping prophet” Jeremiah who despite being put into stocks (20:2), thrown into prison (32:2), lowered into a miry cistern (38:6) never stopped pleading with Israel to repent and God to not destroy them?²⁷ James encouraged his brothers and sisters of the Dispersion through the prophet’s example of patience in persecution²⁸ to realize that they too can choose to not grumble or blame each other but instead rejoice that God viewed them worthy to let their lights shine in great darkness!

Patience in persecution has incredible benefits for in our perseverance believers often experience an increase in both faith and spiritual maturity! Charles Spurgeon stated “the best



piece of furniture he ever had in his house was the cross of affliction”²⁹ for it is often in the “saltiest of seas”³⁰ that believers draw nearer and seek comfort from the “Man of Sorrows.”³¹ Blessed is the person who is persecuted for righteousness sake (Matthew 5:10) for such an experience can teach them many a sublime lesson.³² For example, when the Shepherd chooses to shear from us sheep the wool of sin and

²⁵ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up James](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 154.

²⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letter of James](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000), 227.

²⁷ Donald W. Burdick, [“James,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 202.

²⁸ Peter H. Davids, [James](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 120.

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 325.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 328.

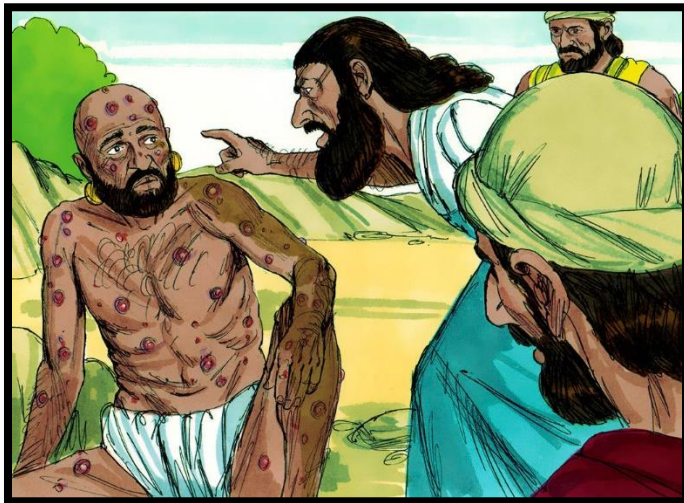
³¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 329.

³² C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 328.

complacency in our lives³³ we are to welcome His knife of discipline³⁴ for once sin is shed we can conform to His perfect will and experience a deeper relationship with our Cup and Portion.³⁵ And when it comes to being persecuted for righteousness sake should we not rejoice for having been counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake? ³⁶ Is it not in persecution with perseverance that faith in God is tested and given the opportunity to grow?³⁷ From the example of the prophets let us rejoice in persecution³⁸ for when Christ returns great will our riches in heaven be for doing His will!³⁹

Patience in Trials and Tribulations – Job (verse 11)

When it comes to patience in tribulations James tells his fellow Christians to look at the



example of Job. Despite being “blameless and upright, fearing God shunning evil” (1:1),⁴⁰ God unleashed the “dog of hell,”⁴¹ Satan, and allowed him to afflict Job with as much tribulation as possible without taking his physical life (2:6). After the Sabeans took his oxen and donkeys (1:15), the fire of God burned up his sheep (1:16), a mighty wind collapsed the house killing his sons and daughters (1:19) and having received “painful sores from the soles of his

³³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 335.

³⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 335.

³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 328.

³⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 327.

³⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 327.

³⁸ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letter of James](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000), 226.

³⁹ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letter of James](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000), 230.

⁴⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 296.

⁴¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 295.

feet to the crown of his head” (2:7); Job’s response was: “may the name of the Lord be praised” (2:21)! Even when his wife advised him to “curse God and die” (2:9) and those miserable comforters,⁴² Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz tried to convince him that his calamities were the result of his sin,⁴³ Job remained steadfast in his belief that despite allowing these horrendous calamities happen to a righteous man, God was still his portion!⁴⁴ At the end of Job’s story we are told that once endured his “sad bereavement, abject poverty, and terrible torment of body and mind,”⁴⁵ he received a double portion of what he had stared out with!

If Job had not faithfully endured his tribulations would he have been ready to receive a double portion⁴⁶ and would we have ever heard of his patience? “The enemy could not triumph over Job, he threw him on a dunghill, and it became his throne, more glorious than the



ivory throne of Solomon.”⁴⁷ It is hard enough to watch others bear afflictions but when it touches our bones, flesh and minds without God it becomes unbearable.⁴⁸ Since chance happens to everyone (Ecclesiastes 9:11) and the rain falls both on the righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:45), it is not the dunghill but steadfast faith in God during affliction that is the story of Job that will last forever. In other words,

circumstances define good character only when handled rightly. If one rebels against God’s dispensations for one’s life, then His “medicines turn into poisons and increase one’s griefs by refusing to endure them.”⁴⁹ While often God does not give us the reasons that He allows our

⁴² C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 297.

⁴³ Job sinned in the end by questioning and demanding God to defend his actions.

⁴⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 292.

⁴⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 293.

⁴⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 330.

⁴⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 293.

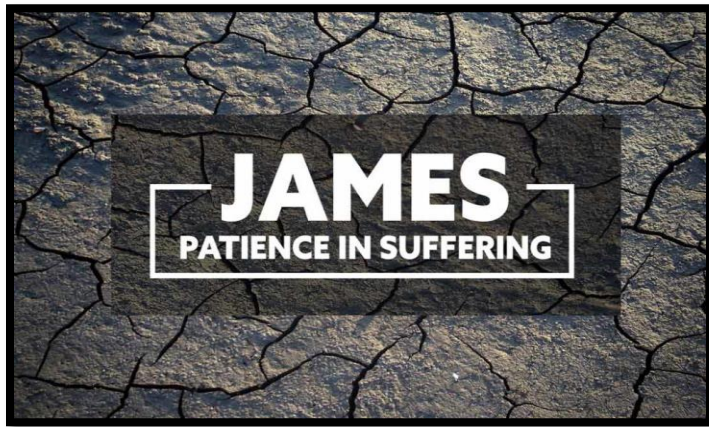
⁴⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“The Pearl of Patience,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 292.

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afflictions to occur, we must not forget that God is still sovereign and not one hair on our heads will perish without His permission.⁵⁰ And even if God should allow our bodies to decay prematurely, should we not rejoice for having been given the opportunity to grow spiritually⁵¹ and in our patient and faithful endurance be an amazing light unto the nations? Praise be that the Lord stands near and stops our afflictions the moment they have served His intended purpose!⁵²

Patiently Waiting for the Crop (7-8)

James finishes this part of his letter by stating that no matter how difficult life's circumstances become be patient for the Lord will soon appear and make all things right! Like the farmer⁵³ we are asked to be patient for the crop. Just like there is nothing that the Palestinian farmer can do to speed up the coming of rain,⁵⁴ neither can those who suffer in persecution or



tribulation speed up the return of the Lord.⁵⁵ This does not mean we are to be passive, lazy observers of life's difficulties⁵⁶ but like the farmer who weeds, hoes and fertilizes the crops⁵⁷ while waiting for rain, we too need to be weeding sin out of lives through confession and always willing to obey God's will as one who is constantly building new furrows in our souls! Living in a fallen world it is inevitable that we are going to face many circumstances of which we have no

control and therefore need to trust in God and make every attempt to persevere and remain faithful unto Him.⁵⁸ Since we do not know exactly when the Lord will return we are to "watch and pray" (Matthew 24:42) which means that in seeking first the kingdom of God we invite Him to renew

⁵⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, ["The Pearl of Patience,"](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 294–295.

⁵¹ C. H. Spurgeon, ["The Pitifulness of the Lord the Comfort of the Afflicted,"](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 31 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 329.

⁵² C. H. Spurgeon, ["The Pearl of Patience,"](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 295.

⁵³ I-Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, [A Handbook on the Letter from James](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 180.

⁵⁴ Donald W. Burdick, ["James,"](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 201.

⁵⁵ I-Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, [A Handbook on the Letter from James](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 181.

⁵⁶ Peter H. Davids, [James](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 118.

⁵⁷ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, [James](#), vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 227.

⁵⁸ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up James](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 154.

and transform our minds and hearts on a daily basis.⁵⁹ Through the power of the Holy Spirit Yes we can be patient and find strength in helplessness, joy in submissions, rest in resignation and heaven on this earth in full submission to His perfect will!

⁵⁹ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up James](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2009), 153.