

James

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James 5:7-11

Vss. 7-9

- James here begins to turn towards home. In his heart and the hearts of most of his generation, there is not much time before Christ returns. "So hang in there.", he urges them, "Be patient!" We are no longer an agrarian society so we do not understand the pace at which farm culture works. Granted, there is always work to do, but nothing we do will make the crop grow faster. You busy yourself getting things ready for the harvest but the harvest comes when it comes.

- James speaks of the early and late rains. In his part of the world the early rains fell in October to November. The seed requires this rain to trigger germination. The late rains would not fall until April and May causing the plants to mature and grow strong. Therefore, the Christian must wait on God's own time just as the farmer must wait on nature and its own time.

- Now James says two things toward a certain point: 1) strengthen your hearts 2) do not complain against one another → because the Lord is near, indeed He is right at the door. So first, strengthen your hearts. Yes, things are tough and yes, it seems the Lord is taking a long time in His return, but have faith! Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of wars and there would be earthquakes, plagues, and famines, but these were only the BEGINNINGS of the birth pangs (Mark 13:8). Down through history, as man's inhumanity to man was displayed over and over again and natural disasters killed thousands, people who were horrified at the carnage believed surely that the Lord would come quickly. But all this was just the beginning of the beginning. Jesus did not say He would return when things got really bad. He gave us a mission to take the gospel to everyone on the earth and that mission is not completed. Nor does God measure time or anything as we measure. Slow to us surely does not seem to be slow to God. So we are not to get lazy or despair, but use the time as the farmer does, staying at the work. We are to be preparing for the King as the farmer prepares for the harvest (1 Peter 4:7-10). And second, do not complain against each other. Blaming one another for the condition we find ourselves in makes

ourselves a judge against our brother. Specifically, James is speaking to the bickering between the Greek and Jewish Christians. The one who remains kosher is not more spiritually superior than the one who does not and the reverse is true as well. When times are difficult for the church, to love one another is more important than ever!

Vss. 10-11

- As a word of encouragement, James exhorts the church to exhibit the patience, the **active** patience, of the prophets of old. Not long ago we looked at Amos. He knew the word God had given him to speak to the Jewish people of the Northern Kingdom, but the people did not want to hear. Amos saw for himself how they flaunted their sin and how they did not care one bit. To see the trouble and speak God's word to it and then to pray, but to not get the immediate response from the Lord that you knew needed to come would require greater faith and patience. Remember, "faith is the assurance of things **hoped for**, the conviction of things not seen", (Hebrews 11:1). So what do we truly believe? If we truly believe God's promises we continue to live faithfully as we patiently wait on His return, no matter how long it takes.

- James then points to Job as **THE** example. He does not diminish the difficulties and sufferings of Christians in the late 1st century, rather he gives them the example of one who is the poster child for suffering. But our word "patience" is too soft to describe Job during his struggles. Job did not sit passively by, as he simply endured Satan's torments. He was angry. He regularly questioned God as to how unjustly he was being treated, but his faith stayed strong. This whole attitude is summed up in Job 13:15, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him". Job knew that his Redeemer lived (Job 19:25) and at the end of his story we are told in Job 42:12 that, "The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning". James is saying he understands our frustrations but tells us to never give up hope in God, "who is full of compassion and is merciful".