

“Be Patient, Brethren”

October 21, 2012

Text: James 5:7-8

Bobbi I had a wonderful, relaxing vacation in South

Carolina, then back this week, w/ a layover in Chicago.

It was supposed to be a 3½ hour layover, but lasted 8½ hours.

After about 4 hours, a tornado warning sent over 1000 people in our concourse down into the safety of an underground tunnel that connects it to other concourses.

Then when we later returned to our gate, the man at the podium casually announced that our flight had now been canceled.

Suddenly all these confused people on our flight went scurrying toward a customer service desk, hoping to book some other flight out of Ohare Airport.

Another airline-official suggested we look on the flight information board for alternate flights to Phoenix, go to the appropriate gates, & get on their stand-by lists.

Suddenly about 100 people who had been waiting at customer service were racing each other for those 3 other gates.

Bobbi/I separated, knowing that 2 competitors in this race would be better than 1, & that we could communicate w/ each other on our cell phones.

Then I tried to call her, & got a sweet voice on the other end of the line, saying, “This is Bobbi. Leave a message.”

One of us wasn't getting phone service at that moment.
Somewhere in all of this, I became sinfully impatient.
I felt bad about that, but I felt even worse when I then looked up
this week's text (Jms 5:7-11), which begins w/ a
command=> "*Be **patient**, therefore, brethren.*"

This passage links our need of patience w/ our fellow man
(esp. believers), to our need for patience in difficult
circumstances (e.g. getting stuck in an airport).

James uses 2 words for patience, the 1st one meaning to be
long-tempered, rather than short-tempered.

The 2nd meaning to remain under the pressure of difficult
circumstances, by holding onto our faith in the Lord.

Today we will examine verses 7-8 of this text, where only that
1st word is found—*makrothumeo*: to be long-tempered.

***Makrothumia* patience in a Xn context, is not merely
controlling our words/actions when we're frustrated.**

And contrary to the Gk view of patience in James' day, it's
not merely a persistent willingness to wait out events,
rather than trying to force them in our own strength.

Patience for a Xn is to be part of his whole way of life.

It is an aspect of his godly wisdom, which waits on the
Lord, trusting His sovereign grace/goodness to
accomplish His own purposes--on His own timetable.

Instead of inwardly wrestling w/ problems/people, a Xn is to love others, trust his Lord, & rest patiently/quietly in Him (not letting himself get flustered).

** We can only do that, as we walk by the Spirit, not by the flesh.

I.e., as long as worldly distractions such as cancelled flights don't persuade us to abandon heavenly wisdom for worldly wisdom, & to stop loving God/our-neighbor.

Gal 5:22=> *"The fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, / gentleness, self-control" (5:22-23).*

Whenever, in our ongoing lives, we are fully yielded to the Spirit, trusting God w/ every detail of our lives, we will become patient w/ others out of our love for them—as a matter of course.

I Cor 13:4-- *"**Love is patient**, love is [also] **kind**."*

So when my heart is right, and I am filled with the Spirit,

I will be patient, & I will be kind to others as well.

When it's not, and I'm not, I won't be loving/kind/patient.

Because God is patient, He is slow to judge people in His anger.

Psa 86:15=> *"Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, **Slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness and truth."*

Num 14:18 ties God's patience to His forgiveness=>

*"The LORD is **slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness, **forgiving iniquity** & transgression."*

So there's a direct connection between patience and willingness to forgive.

Jesus cited the patience/forgiveness of the Lord as the reason why people whom God has forgiven of their sins must be ready to patiently forgive other people, who have sinned against them.

In one of His parables, He described a slave who owed an enormous debt to his master, but said=> *"Have **patience** w/ me, and I will repay you everything"* (Mt 18:26).

X added=> *"The lord of that slave felt **compassion** and released him and **forgave** him the debt"* (18:27).

That was an act of patient kindness/compassion.

X then explained that we, having been patiently forgiven by God, must patiently forgive others, as well.

James gives us a command in our text=> "*Be patient!*"

But our ability to do that can quickly get away from us, & our patience will inevitably snap, when our attitudes become fleshly, & we walk in the unloving wisdom of this world. Unfortunately, I've been there, & you prob. have too. But we can't excuse ourselves, saying "Everybody gets impatient, it's only human nature."

We must learn to obey our Lord's command, to "Be patient."

In the context of James 5, the believers to whom James was writing had a special need for patience.

As we saw in verses 1-6, many of them were poor people being oppressed by the rich, who even refused to pay them the daily wages for which they had worked.

Back in James 2:6, we learned that the rich were dragging them into court, and 5:6 explains that, saying of them *“You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.”*

The rich were using the court system to put poor people to death.

It was—injustice, blatant evil under the cover of law.

This then is the situation to which James is commanding his readers to respond w/ patience.

He doesn't say, “Throw off the yoke of this whole corrupt/unjust legal system, & establish a government that is just.”

He doesn't even tell them to take the rich men to court in the hope of receiving justice from the present system.

He simply says, *“Be **patient**, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.”*

Jesus will make everything right, when He comes.

Meanwhile, just keep an upright/loving/Spirit-filled attitude, so you'll react to these wicked rich-people, patiently.

Jms 5:7-11 provides believers w/ 4 principles for remaining patient under the duress of trials/difficult-situations=>

* Anticipate X's coming (vss 7-8)

- * Beware of X's judgment (vs 9)
- * Emulate the prophets (10-11a)
- * Recognize God's purpose (11b)

This morning, we will only explore the 1st of these principles=>

Anticipate X's coming (vss 7-8).

James begins with the command for us to be patient.

[James 5:7a]=> “*Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.*”

James is saying, “I know how unjustly the rich have treated you.

“I understand the outrage/frustration/anxiety you must feel.

“I realize how much your flesh must yearn for revenge.

“But don't give-in to such hateful/worldly attitudes.

“Be patient, love/forgive your enemies, & trust your Lord,
knowing He is coming back, & He will set all things
right when He comes.

“So keep-on, moment-by-moment, incident-by-incident,
resisting the temptation to feel sorry for yourself, or
to strike out with bitter-words, & acts-of-anger.

**James says to be patient “*until the coming of the Lord,*” and
we need to understand exactly what the coming of the
Lord is, & how it fits into this situation.**

The “coming of the Lord” is a technical term which primarily
(not exclusively) refers to Jesus' 2nd Coming at the end of
the Tribulation & the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
E.g. X Himself used it this way in Mt 24:37=>

*“The **coming** of the Son of Man will be just like the*

days of Noah.”

Verse 40=> *“There shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.”*

The one left alive at X’s 2nd Coming, will have survived the Trib. as Noah survived the Flood.

The one taken away, as the flood swept away the sinful people in Noah’s time, won’t survive X’s coming with eyes of fire and a mouth that smites with divine words, like a sword.

So X’s “coming” here a/w/a several other texts (e.g. 2 Thes 2:1-8) makes its primary reference, the 2nd Coming.

But this same word “Coming” sometimes refers to the Rapture.

E.g. I Thes 4=> *“We who are alive & remain until the **coming** of the Lord [same Gk word], shall not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. / For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, & with the trumpet of God; & the dead in Christ shall rise first. [This is the resurrection of the saints, at the time of the Rapture] / Then we who are alive & remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall **always be with the Lord**” [15-17].*

That’s the Rapture & it’s referred to here as the Lord’s “Coming.”

That last phrase *“always be with the Lord”* is an important key for a correct understanding of what the “coming of the Lord” essentially means.

His “coming” is not simply His arrival on earth; it’s His staying with us, to bless His people with His ongoing presence, in heaven after the Rapture, & on earth after the Second Coming.

In our own text, James tells his readers to be patient “*until the coming of the Lord,*” because their being with Him, will be the ultimate source of comfort for them.

* If it’s at the 2nd Coming, they will be comforted by X’s re-ordering the whole world so that justice, righteousness, and love will prevail on earth at all times.

* If it’s at the Rapture, they’ll be comforted by meeting the Lord in the air, going w/ Him to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and receiving their eternal rewards from Him.

** But most importantly, their simply being with Him, in the glory of His presence all the time will be their ultimate comfort.

Q: What about those who die before either the Rapture/Second-Coming—Will there be any comfort for them, in heaven, before X’s Coming?

Yes—His “appearing” to them (& us) at death, will be very comforting.

Paul wrote this about his own death, which he referred to as his “*departure*”=>

*“In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day [the day of his departure (vs 6)]; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His **appearing**” (II Tim 4:8).*

Xns who have “loved X’s appearing” are those who look forward to being w/-Him/near-Him, whether it’s at the 2nd Coming, the Rapture, or their own death.

They anticipate X’s greeting them as He greeted Stephen, who said as he was dying=> *“Behold, **I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God**” (Acts 7:56).*

If we are called to suffer at the hands of wicked people (such as the rich men in Jms 5:1-6), or thru adverse circumstances (such as a cancelled flight, or far more significantly, the persecution of the saints for their faith) James calls us to do it patiently.

Being w/ X someday, will bring such great reward, that we will fully agree w/ Paul that=> *“momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (II Cor 4:17).*

Now, James gives us an analogy to help us better understand what it means to patiently wait, in view of X’s Coming=> a farmer.

[Verse 7b]=> *“Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.”*

We *can* wait patiently, knowing something precious is coming our way, just as a farmer waits for his precious produce.

James' main point seems to be that the Xn's life is like farming, in that there are certain things man must do, and certain things that only God can do, so we must wait patiently for Him to do them.

A farmer must plow his field and plant the kind of seed he wants to grow, and to harvest.

If he plants nothing, the only thing he can expect to harvest is thorns/thistles, because that is what this earth has naturally produced ever since the fall of Adam.

If he wants wheat, he must plant wheat seeds.

If corn, he must plant corn.

On the level of spiritual analogy, Paul tells us—“*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap*” (Gal 6:7).

If a believer sows to his flesh, he will reap corruption every time, w/o exception.

If he sows to the Spirit, by reading God's Word faithfully, spending time in prayer, worship, and ministry to others, he will reap spiritual benefits, for his soul.

Although farmers must perform certain tasks in order to grow a crop, there are other tasks which only God can accomplish. Only He can turn seeds into stalks of grain, or apple trees.

So man's job, after planting the seed, may involve watering, and it may involve weeding, but a plant's actual germination/growth requires a miracle, performed only by the unseen hand of God.

If a man plants a seed, then childishly digs into the soil around it a week later, to see how it's doing, he'll prob. kill the seed. His job at this point is to keep his hands off, watching, waiting, & leaving the growth process in God's hands.

He may worry that the weather is too hot or too cold, that there's not enough rain, or too much rain.

But he must submit to the reality that the whole process (including the weather) is really out of his hands, & now it's up to God.

He must simply trust the Lord for the results.

After the Great Flood, God promised Noah=> *"While the earth remains, **Seedtime & harvest**, & cold & heat, And summer & winter, And day & night Shall not cease"* (Gen 8:22).

But God showed Israel that their sin could cause Him to temporarily disrupt seedtime/harvests with drought.

But the farmer has no choice but to trust that the Lord will sovereignly bring about the conditions necessary to grow his crop.

This waiting process can be excruciatingly long.

* The early rains in Israel occur in late October (right now).

That's when the soil must be plowed, & seed planted.

* The late rains come in April/May, and good rains at that crucial point in the growth process, usually mean good crop yield.

Sometimes we exasperate ourselves because of the slowness of our own spiritual growth.

That's exactly how I felt at Ohare Airport earlier this week, asking myself, Why do you lose patience so quickly?

But in view of the analogy of the farmer, James tells us in=>

[Verse 8]=> *"You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."*

As farmers wait for the rain, a Xn waits for his own growth & he awaits X's coming, when all sin/evil will be banished from earth, by X's iron rod.

This is true whether it applies to Jesus' 2nd Coming when we will be glorified, or to the Rapture when X will take His people home to give us our rewards, or to a believer's entering into X's glorious presence at the moment of his death.

Meanwhile we, like the farmer, need patience, amid all the injustice/oppression of this fallen/corrupt world.

We must learn to wait on God, patiently/quietly, just as a farmer waits for his crop to emerge from the ground.

James adds that we need to strengthen our hearts (our inner spiritual life), so that we will be able to wait patiently.

We need to make them spiritually stable, so that every unpleasant personality or adverse circumstance that comes along won't overwhelm us, causing us to fall prey to impatience.

Ultimately, spiritual strengthening is the unseen, inward work of God in the soil of our hearts.

So Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, that God would=>

*“**establish** [same word translated “*strengthen*”] your hearts *unblamable in holiness*” (I Thes 3:13).*

But God uses a variety of circumstances to strengthen us.

* In I Thes 2, He strengthens our hearts through=>

*“every good **work** and **word**” (2:17).*

Hearing the Word doesn't strengthen a Xn

unless/until he actually lives out the truths he has learned, by doing good works.

* I Pet 5 says God uses suffering to “*strengthen/establish*” us (5:10).

* But ultimately, there can be no spiritual strengthening of the heart, apart from being taught the Word of God.

So Jesus told Peter (Lk 22:32) to “***strengthen** your brothers,*” by feeding them the Word, as their spiritual shepherd.

Later on, Peter wrote=> “*I shall always be ready to **remind** you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been **established** [strengthened] in the truth*” (II Pet 1:12).

It is constant feeding on the Word of God that strengthens our faith, and keeps us focused on X's Coming.

That alone can give us the patience we need when assailed by people/circumstances that try our patience.

By contrast, when we neglect God's Word, and forget about the great hope of every believer—X's Coming—we get drawn away, by the things of the world.

We stop living in the light of Jesus' imminent return, which every true Xn anticipates.

Then it no longer has a purifying effect on our lives, that God intends it to have.

We become double-minded men, unstable in all our ways.

Instead of going on to vss 9-11, let's spend our last few minutes meditating once again on James' illustration of the farmer, which contains rich truths we haven't yet fully gleaned.

He who ordained seed-time & harvest intended to instruct us through them, so let's see if we can squeeze a little more instruction out of that illustration.

1st the farmer teaches us the logic of sowing/reaping.

He expects the harvest, because he has worked for it, by sowing his seed.

If he had stayed at home watching TV in October, he would have no reason to expect a harvest in May/June/July.

By the same token, if we sow wild oats, indulging our passions rather than the things that make for peace, we have no reason to expect we will reap anything but heartache/misery.

* If we sow the wind, we can fully expect to reap the whirlwind (as the prophet Hosea said).

* If we sow the truth in our hearts, but only sparingly, we can expect to reap its benefits sparingly.

It's all very logical, because there is a direct relationship between sowing/reaping.

As we saw earlier, *"Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."*

* If we make no effort to serve our Lord, but expect to hear "Well done, good faithful servant," we're foolish, indulging ourselves in a foolish self-deception that no farmer could afford.

God graciously saves our souls apart from our own works, but Xns who expect something for nothing, in terms of eternal rewards, are like a foolish farmer, who faces the heat of summer with nothing to eat.

As Spurgeon put it=>

"It is only those who, by God's grace, have been enabled to sow abundantly... who shall afterward come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them."

Brothers/sisters in X, what are you striving for, spiritually?

- * If for a life of holiness, & nearness to the Lord, according to the truth of God's Word, you shall have it.
- * If you are spiritually half-hearted/careless/worldly, your rightful fruit can only be the sad/bitter fruit of doublemindedness.
- * And if you're really a worldling, you can only reap eternal hell.

2nd, like the farmer, ours is a life of waiting—patiently.

Waiting on the Lord is always our vocation, as His servants.

Initially he has only outlay, not income, in his farming enterprise.

He takes seed that he could otherwise use to feed his family and casts it into the ground, trusting the Lord of the harvest to keep His word, and reward his efforts.

But there is no immediate reward for him, only a life of investment/toil/waiting.

And there will be no reward until the end of the growing season, when he can reap/sell his crops.

By the same token, we believers can expect no real recompense for our faith/obedience until the Lord comes to rapture us out of here, or calls us home before that.

It's true that here/now we can enjoy peace that surpasses comprehension, and the joy of Xn assurance, & communion w/ our Lord.

But ultimately, we are spiritual aliens in a world that is
hostile to our Master, & our real reward is not to be
found here.

We don't live for this world's praise, because the best you can do
w/ that, is to chisel it onto some fading gravestone.

And it will not affect God's judgment of our hearts/lives,
whatever others think of us.

Paul told the Corinthians=> *"To me it is a very small thing
that I should be examined by you, or by any human
court; in fact, I do not even examine myself"*(I C 4:3).

Our success, like that of the farmer, can only be determined
by the fruit of our lives at harvest-time, and we must
wait for that.

3rd, we can wait patiently because the harvest will be precious,
and we look forward to tha.

If the Lord draws us near to Him through affliction, that precious
result will be a clearer image of Himself in us, and
ultimately an eternal weight of glory.

Precious too, it will be, to hear Him say to us, "Well done!"

If, through our ministry to others, our Savior gives us the
privilege of leading them to faith in Him, that will be
harvest enough for us, for now.

If He uses us to bring one of our own children back from
their sinful ways, to faithfully love X, that's enough.

If a Sunday School teacher has the joy of watching a student give his/her heart/life to X, and trust/love Him w/ sincerity, the harvest he/she brings to lay at the Master's feet, will be an ample cause for rejoicing.

Meanwhile, brethren, let us learn from the farmer to wait patiently, in the calm assurance that our Lord is coming back for us, and He could come at any moment.

“Be Patient, Brethren”

(Part 1)

October 21, 2012

Text: James 5:7-8

1. This passage uses two words for patience, the first one meaning to be long-tempered; the second meaning to remain under the pressure of difficult circumstances by holding onto our [12 faith] in the Lord.
 2. We can only do that as we walk by the [14 Spirit], not by the flesh.
Gal 5:22-23; I Cor 13:4; Psa 86:15; Num 14:18; Matt 18:26-27
 3. James gives us a command in to “Be patient”; but our ability to do that can quickly snap when our attitudes become fleshly and we walk in the [20 unloving] wisdom of this world.
Jms 2:6; 5:6
 4. James 5:7-11 provides believers with four principles for remaining patient under the duress of difficult situations:
 - * Anticipate Christ’s coming (vss 7-8)
 - * Beware of Christ’s judgment (vs 9)
 - * Emulate the prophets (10-11a)
 - * Recognize [12 God’s] purpose (11b)
- [James 5:7a]**
5. The “coming of the Lord” is a technical term which primarily refers to Jesus’ [14 Second] Coming at the end of the Tribulation.
Mt 24:37, 40; II Thes 2:1-8; I Thes 4:15-17
 6. James tells his readers to be patient “*until the coming of the Lord*” because their being [10 with] Him will be the ultimate source of comfort.
II Tim 4:8; Acts 7:56; II Cor 4:17
 7. Now James gives us an analogy to help us better understand what it means to patiently [10 wait] in view of Christ’s Coming—the farmer.
[Verse 7b]
Gal 6:7; Gen 8:22
 8. The farmer has no choice but to trust that the Lord will sovereignly bring about the conditions necessary to [10 grow] his crop.

[Verse 8]

9. James adds that we need to strengthen our hearts so that we will be able to [10 wait] patiently.

I Thes 3:13; 2:17; I Pet 5:10; Lk 22:32; II Pet 1:12

10. It is constant feeding on the [10 Word] of God that strengthens our faith and keeps us focused on Christ's Coming.

James' illustration of the farmer contains rich truths we haven't yet fully gleaned...

- *11. First, the farmer teaches us the [12 logic] of sowing and reaping.

- *12. Second, like the farmer's, ours is a life of [16 waiting]—patiently.

I Cor 4:3

- *13. Third, we can wait patiently because the harvest will be [18 precious].

14. Brethren, let us learn from the farmer to [10 wait] patiently.