

Praying Together Patiently

Համերոտեամբ Աղօթել Միասին

James 5:7-20

Last Sunday we covered how James described the rich oppressing the poor. James reminded them that there is a judgment day, and their wealth will become nothing. The cries of the oppressed have reached the ears of God. God will come down and take care of this. The suffering of the people will end one day.

We also spoke about the oppressed not opposing. Taking revenge is not advised. God is our avenger. This does not mean we should not resist evil that can harm people or society, (thief, rapist, murderer, and so on). Meanwhile, approaching this issue with **meekness** is better. “Meekness is not weakness; it is strength under control,” as Ray Stedman would say.

James prepared the oppressed person saying:

1. Be Patient (μακροθυμέω) *Makrothymeō* (long suffering)

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. (James 5:7 ESV)

God heard your plea. Wait as farmer waits. We are in Fresno, and to this day, farmers know best about waiting. Some of you in the farming business know it best. Farmers know and experience that there is season for everything. Also the farmer know that there is a time for pruning, plowing, planting...The farmer also sleeps at night, relaxes and waits patiently for the rain (or no rain at all). James uses the picture of farmer because his audience would understand this very well. James uses an important word for patience. The word that has been used is “long-suffering”, a long way to go, have a long fuse.

2. To wait with the right attitude

You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. (James 5:8-9 ESV)

While you are waiting, please wait with right heart, the right kind of attitude. If the answer is delayed; relax and have right attitude towards God and people. Question: don't you get tried from people who always find a reason to complain? It is not healthy for a church to grumble against each other, warning James said you will be judged accordingly.

Illustration: A famous preacher, (Wesley, or Spurgeon, I am not sure) had a chicken coop in his backyard. The preacher and his wife sold those eggs. The congregation always grumbled why their pastor was making a business with those eggs. Only after the pastor's death they found out that the money that the pastor made was totally given to missionaries. Do not grumble about people. Do not judge them.

3. Stand Firm, steadfast (under pressure) (ὑπομένω) (*hypomenō*)

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 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. (James 5:10-11)

Steadfast character will be a blessing, *hypomone* is to remain under pressure and become stronger day by day. God is compassionate and merciful. James mentions the prophets. How true when we read life of prophets; they remained under pressure faithfully serving God. How about Job, we can learn from Job how he lost everything, family friends and remained faithful to God. it mean to live life of steadfast.

Another topic that James brings in this section is that God is steadfast in his mercy and compassion towards humanity. How true is that when we read the writings of the prophets of the OT. How many times Israelite turned away from God and how God waited patiently return of His people?

4. Be true to your word

But above all, my brothers, **do not swear**, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your **“yes” be yes** and your **“no” be no**, so that **you may not fall under condemnation**. (James 5:12ESV)

How difficult it is to work or live with people if you doubt that what they say may be true or false. My dad used to tell me there was a time in Turkey (Western Armenia) where the court did not ask Armenian Evangelicals to put their hands on the Bible to swear to tell the truth. The court knew that their Yes was Yes, and their No was No. How accurate (true) is our word?

Now James wants to end his letter with prayer and worship:

Being patient does not mean being passive. It is deeper. Let me quote from Hegesippus of the 2nd Century, an early church father and historian describing James:

“...and he (James) used to be found kneeling on his knees, begging forgiveness for the people-so that the skin of his knees became horny like that of a camel's, by reason of his constantly bending the knee in adoration to God, and begging forgiveness for the people.”¹

The early church remembered James not by his beauty, his height, or his speech, **but by his knees, as hard as a camel's**. The center of this letter is prayer. Everything else is around prayer.

Therefore James wants to end his letter saying, “There will be suffering and hardship in our lives. How do we encounter them.”

- Patience,
- Right heart,
- Steadfastness
- Prayer and worship.

David Roper summarized: **Patience is a “humble acceptance of God’s ways while He works out His will for us.”**²

Is anyone among you **suffering (trouble NIV)**? Let him **pray**. Is anyone **cheerful (happy NIV)**? Let him **sing praise**.¹⁴ Is anyone among you **sick**? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them **pray over him, anointing him with** oil in the name of the Lord. (5:13-14 ESV)

James will end his letter with the most important thing that he practiced, **praying and worshipping God**. His knees were like the camel's knees. This meant hours of prayer to God.

We often talk about prayer, but do we pray? We may attend seminars about prayer. We may read books about prayer. We may ask others to pray for us. These are good things, but do we pray?

George MacDonald put it so well: **“God will carry us in His arms until we can walk, and He will carry us when we cannot walk. But He will not carry us in His arms if we will not walk.”**

Walk the talk is our topic. There are wonderful practical commands in the book of James for us to live a Christ-like life in the world. There will be suffering and persecutions, but trusting God and being nourished by Him will give us daily wisdom and strength to continue as salt and light in this world.

Let me finish with a verse from Peter:

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7,8)

Amen.

1 <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/h/hegesippus.html>

2 David Roper, Growing slowly Wise p 163