



Lesson 13 May 27, 2010

Patiently Endure or Be Ashamed

Having accurately depicted a fallen world where money and power corrupted those who possessed them (or more accurately were possessed *by* them) into using their resources and position for unjust, wicked purposes and for selfishly indulgent pursuits, James begins this portion of his letter with “therefore” to re-introduce (from chapter one) the necessity of patience in such a wicked world. James repeatedly and optimistically reminds the reader of the eminent return of the Lord Who will bring righteousness and justice to all who are oppressed, particularly the poor – “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) at “the times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21).

1. In verses 7-9, James emphasizes the importance and need for patience and longsuffering until the Lord’s return, even as the farmer must patiently wait for his seed to germinate and mature into a crop of precious fruit for harvest (v7), in much the same way that our trials and tests will produce a spiritual harvest. James repeats the need for patience and an established heart (v8) and exhorts that brethren should not grumble or, literally, murmur against one another, lest they be condemned by the returning Judge (v9), his third and comforting reference to the Lord’s return in each of these three verses. Note also that there are similarly three commands to be patient, the suggestion being that the imminence of His soon coming should instill in us patient endurance and hope. How do these passages reinforce some of James’ points?

Isaiah 11:4

1 Corinthians 10:10

Galatians 5:22-23; 6:9

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

1 John 2:28



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2. In verse 10, James reminds his brethren that the prophets patiently suffered affliction for their speaking to the people on behalf of God. How do these scriptures convey a similar theme?

2 Chronicles 24:20-21

Matthew 5:10-12

Hebrews 10:36

3. In verses 11-12, James acknowledges the blessings of happiness for those who endure, using Job as an example of such perseverance and patience; however, note that the blessings followed the trial, for there can be no victory without a battle, and James confirmed that the Lord's intended purpose to show Himself to be compassionate and merciful was ultimately revealed (v11) toward Job. He then cautions that words should be sparingly used (v12), repeating Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount, since we usually say what we later regret in the midst of trials and suffering. What important points do these verses emphasize in concert with James' exhortations?

Job 1:8, 12; 2:3, 6; 23:10; 42:1-6

2 Corinthians 4:17

Hebrews 4:14-16

1 Peter 5:10



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Personal Application

James almost immediately begins his epistle with the exhortation for the believer to become spiritually mature (perfect) in verse four of the first chapter. Indeed, that call is the principal theme for the book, and James confirms that without our faith being tested with, hopefully and prayerfully, the ensuing development of patience, we cannot achieve maturity. As James finishes his letter, he returns to the subject of patient endurance and longsuffering, and it is hardly coincidental that he uses Job as a model of testing as it would be difficult to find anyone who suffered as much as Job.

It is important to realize that Job's suffering was not a consequence of his sin -- in God's sight, Job was *"a perfect and upright man, one that fears God and shuns evil"* (Job 1:8), yet the Lord allowed Satan to take his children, his wealth, and his health, leaving him only a wife who foolishly counseled suicide and three supposed friends who falsely accused him. Job maintained his integrity by patiently enduring an ordeal that was far beyond his finite, human understanding in which the fundamental purpose for his suffering was to silence the blasphemous accusations of Satan and to prove that man would honor God despite losing everything. Interestingly, James does confirm that another reason for the test was for God to demonstrate that He *"is very compassionate and of tender mercy"* (James 5:11), and the Lord certainly had other purposes as well for Job's attitude changed markedly as underscored by his humbling himself before the Lord and praying for his three friends before his ultimate restoration and blessing. God never wastes the suffering of His children!

Paul reminds us that *"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). Accordingly, we must understand that any trials and tests are always Father filtered, and *"God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able"* (1 Corinthians 10:13) as *"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12) on a spiritual battleground.

Job declared that when God *"has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10). Consider that gold cannot be harmed by fire, for the flame and heat serve to only purify it further. Likewise, we, too, can be further refined and purified in the fire of testing and suffering as *"the God of all grace Who has called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"* (1 Peter 5:10). Godly character and Christian maturity can only be developed by *"working out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12) by exercising belief, diligence, patience, and trust through difficulties in an effort of applied faith. Perhaps this is a fundamental reason why we are exhorted repeatedly to *"in everything give thanks"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18) and to *"know that all things work together for good to them that love God"* (Romans 8:28). May we therefore trust and abide in our ever compassionate and merciful Father through any fiery trial so that we need *"not be ashamed before Him at His coming"* (1 John 2:28) as we patiently endure along the way toward spiritual maturity.