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A0748 – December 2, 2007 – Jas 5:7-11 – Be Patient While Suffering

Before we look at verses 7-9 we want to be clear about a few things in 5:1-6. First, thing I want to say is, I didn't intend to leave the impression that you should cheat on your income taxes or anything like that. Just because the federal government steals through federal withholding does not mean you should police the federal government. As Christians we're called to obey the laws of our country unless they contradict the law of God. So, they are stealing, federal withholding is a serious crime, and you can fight whether it should be legal or not in the court system, but until something is changed we just have to suffer under the injustice and that's sort of what James gets into next. Second thing, I've come down pretty hard on chasing after wealth but what I don't want to leave you with the impression that wealth is wrong. Wealth is not wrong, investing is not wrong, saving is not wrong, enjoying wealth is not wrong, going on trips, having nice things, having a nice dinner, nothing's wrong with all that, we can and should enjoy what God has provided. Where things go wrong is when we have the perspective on wealth. Once we begin thinking that wealth can provide inner happiness and solve our problems then we have a real problem because wealth can't do those things. The only thing that can provide inner happiness and solve your problems is Bible doctrine. So, that's what James is getting at, you may be suffering but don't think money can solve it, obviously, if this passage is a portrait of the Tribulation then having all that wealth isn't going to help them solve their problem. The problem of man can't be reduced to economic factors. Think about it, that's what Communism does. Communism says the problem, man's basic problem is economic and if we get everyone on the same plane economically then man's problems will go away and we'll have a happier world. And I think the 20th century showed that was a miserable theory. Man's problem is not economic, its sin, it's rebellion against God and

yet Communism shows it knows very well there's a problem but men don't want God's answer so they have to come up with something and this is what Marx did but it doesn't solve the problem. The only solution you have for your problems is the word of God and if you reject that then you've rejected the only possible solution. There aren't hundreds of solutions out there there's one solution and 10,503 gimmicks. The answer's not economic, it's not psychological, it's the word of God, Bible doctrine.

Let me say a few more words about 5:1-6. This is a hard section and I'll tell you why, Verse 1 starts with the words **Come now, you rich** and if you're just reading you think he's talking to his audience, just like he did in 4:13, **come now, you who say**, of course, there he's singling out those who actually say that and in 5:1 he's singling out the rich. But 5:1 is more difficult because, as you continue reading the terminology gets pretty harsh. Verses 1-2 aren't that bad, I can see how they could refer directly to a believer but when you hit verse 3 and it talks about the consuming of your flesh like fire and the last days it gets pretty hard to see this as referring to the present age. I heard one guy say this was divine discipline and that's the only other way to go here. If you want to make this to refer to believers of the church age you're going to have to say this is a warning of divine discipline. But, it's hard for me to buy into that because of the language here. Weep and howl, consume your flesh like fire, last days, the Lord of Armies, a day of slaughter. That's all very heavily Tribulation language. So, if I go that way the problem I have to deal with is personal pronouns "you" "your" throughout the passage, which, up till this time have been referring to believers but now I'm saying refers to unbelievers in this section. So, I solved this problem by saying James, in OT prophetic style, is jumping to the eschatological doom of all human wealth to show God's displeasure with those who have the wrong perspective of wealth. If He's that displeased then obviously believers should not adopt the world's perspective of wealth. Our perspective is that only the word of God can solve problems and only the word of God can provide true inner happiness. So, you may not like my solution but, understand that I think the other side has more problems. What's the day of slaughter for believers? When is the flesh of carnal believers going to be consumed like fire? It's difficult for me to see how those descriptions could refer to divine discipline.

James 5:7-9 Μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου. Ἴδού, ὁ γεωργὸς ἐκδέχεται τὸν τίμιον καρπὸν τῆς γῆς, μακροθυμῶν ἐπ’ αὐτόν, ἕως λάβῃ ὑετὸν πρῶτον καὶ ὄψιμον.

⁸Μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς, στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν. ⁹Μὴ στενάζετε κατ’ ἀλλήλων, ἀδελφοί, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἰδού, ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν. **(BYZ)**

James 5:7-9 Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer who waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and latter rains. ⁸You also be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Do not grumble, brothers, against one another, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. **(Author’s Translation)**

James 5:7-9 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. **(NASB95)**

So, let’s pick up in verse 7 with the **Therefore**, key word, *oun*, it’s an inferential conjunction. There’s only been one other inferential conjunction in all of James and that was in 1:21 where the body of the letter began and here in 5:7 where the body concludes. So, these two inferential conjunctions bracket the body of the letter and are textual evidence that we’ve outlined the book correctly.

- I. Prologue: Persevering in Trials to the End (James 1:1-20)
- II. Body: Cultivating DVP Responses to Trial (James 1:21-5:6)
 - A. By Being Quick to Hear (James 1:21-2:26)
 - B. By Being Slow to Speak (James 3:1-18)
 - C. By Being Slow to Anger (James 4:1-5:6)
- III. Epilogue: Persevering in Trials to the End (James 5:7-20)

By now you ought to be able to write out this outline in your sleep if you’ve been here consistently and you’ve been applying yourself. So, the word **Therefore** signals an inference or conclusion to the body of the letter which

began in 1:21 and ended in 5:6. So, now we're going to put into practice what we've learned about Being Quick to Hear, Slow to Speak and Slow to Anger. The main application is this, when you face trials and sufferings **be patient** and **endure**. Hang in there trusting the Lord, trusting that He has a plan, He has a purpose and He's working this out for the good. So, there's no reason to blow up, get angry at everyone and go on a rampage. God knows exactly what He's doing whether you do or not. God never said, "If you become a Christian life is going to be peachy, you won't have any problems it's going to be a piece of cake." He never said that, What He says is, "You're my children and I want you to grow up into spiritual adulthood. I don't want all these baby believers running around, I want spiritually mature adults and I've given you everything you need to grow into a spiritual adult." I've given you My Spirit, I've given you My Word, I've given you Prayer, I've given you a mind, I've given you Pastor-Teachers, I've given you everything you need to grow spiritually." So, there are no excuses." Sometimes I hear, "Oh, it's too hard, I'm not smart, I can't understand all that you're talking about." Well, if you'd half-apply yourself you'd see that you can understand. See, God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. But He's not a rewarder of laziness. "Oh, but I don't have the brains for all that." It has nothing to do with intellectual prowess; it has to do with someone who wants to know the word of God because God is going to reward with understanding those who diligently seek Him. The real issue is that so many Christians are so caught up in everything else going on that they really don't care about God. That's the issue. If I had a nickel for every one of these Christians I'd be the wealthiest man on earth. They are a dime a dozen and they flat out don't want to put the work in. No one's saying it doesn't take work. It does take work. "Oh, but I'm a simple-minded Christian, don't bother me with all the details". Don't mock God. You are not simple-minded. You are the most important creature God ever made, the complex part of His creation and the only thing made in His image. Don't drag His image down by degrading yourself with that simple-minded baloney, that's a mockery of what God made. God didn't make you simple. He made you to know Him. That's the humans primary function. So, if your lazy just admit you don't want to put the work in, you don't want to apply yourself, you want time for you and your activities and if you can't get it just by sitting in church and listening for an hour then you're just not going to get it." And all I can say to that is "Fine. Have it your way. But don't say I didn't warn you." And when you get to the Judgment Seat of Christ He's going to say, "Now look, I gave you everything

you needed, I gave you opportunity after opportunity and you wasted it, you threw it away, you didn't grow." God has a purpose for sending His children trials, He wants His us to advance to spiritual maturity, to grow in doctrine and to apply what we've learned. A child doesn't grow into an adult if the parent babies him through all the trials and neither will Christians. You don't grow spiritually until you apply the doctrine. So, it's a lot like sports, you can learn a skill but when you execute it you move up to another level in your game. It's the same way in the Christian life, you can learn doctrine but when you execute it then you advance, you step up in the Christian life, you grow and we've had examples of Abraham and Rahab who applied doctrine in the midst of trials and advanced spiritually because of it. So, **Therefore** is saying, this is the conclusion of the letter and now it's time to put into practice what we learned.

Therefore, be patient, this is an aorist active imperative. The aorist denotes urgency, it's vital that we now **be patient**. The idea is to remain tranquil while waiting, to be longsuffering. You know, when we get in a jam it is very difficult to be patient, we want this thing to be solved but we have to be patient, it could take hours, days, weeks, months, even years. But we're called to be patient and you're just going to have to trust the Lord, that He knows what He's doing and not get all frazzled. And it's directed toward **brethren**, of course. The **brethren** are always James' fellow believers in this letter beginning in 1:2. He's not giving a test here to see whether they are believer's or not but a test to believers to see whether they will apply doctrine or not, whether they will trust the Lord and be patient. How long are we to remain patient? **until the coming of the Lord**, the *parousia*. There's no time that a Christian should not be patient, have a relaxed mental attitude because He knows God works all things for the good.

Now, when is **the coming of the Lord**? We call this "the parousia" from the Greek word for "coming". It's a word meaning "presence, arrival". It can refer to either the Second Coming of Christ or the Rapture which I see as two distinct events. Here it is the pre-Tribulational Rapture because it's presented in verse 8 and 9 as being imminent, it can happen at-any-moment. There are no prophesied events which must happen before the Rapture. The Second Coming, on the other hand, is not imminent, it cannot happen at-any-moment. There are prophesied events which must happen before the Second Coming. So, this must be the pre-Tribulational Rapture. The Rapture is the

terminus for our being patient. Once He comes we don't have to be patient anymore because our sufferings will be over, we'll be with the Lord. We'll do more with the Rapture in a minute but let's move on to the illustration of patience with the farmer.

Behold the farmer and here we're given the proper two-fold perspective on the Rapture; patient expectancy, it's a delicate balance of patience and expectancy and the farmer is the perfect example. We are to patiently wait for the Lord but also expect the Lord just as the **farmer waits expectantly for the precious fruit of the earth**. The word for **waits** (*ekdechomai*) means "to look for, to wait for", it's this idea that I've planted my seed in the soil and I'm looking forward to the **precious fruit**. The fruit is **precious** because it has exceptional value, it sustains physical life. Most of us rely on it three or more times/day. Without it we would die physically so it is **precious**. Despite its high value the farmer is **patient about it**, because he knows certain things have to take place, there's a process of the seed growing up into a plant that is mature enough to produce fruit. There may be a parallel here to the word of God in a believer heart. The word is planted in the heart at regeneration and is then supposed to grow to spiritual maturity so it can produce fruit (Jas 1:18, 21). So, this may look at the process of spiritual growth. But let's go back to the illustration. Two vital things have to happen in Israel to get the **precious fruit, the early rain and the late rain**. In Israel the growing season is during the winter. You plant in the fall, late September, early October and then pray for the early rain which comes in October-November. This is crucial so the seedling will get established. Then comes the main rain during the winter. Finally you pray for the late rains in the spring, March-April. Turn to Dt 11:14 to see how important these rains were. Incidentally, this phrase **early and late rains** is another evidence that James' is writing to Jewish believers of the diaspora who would be very familiar with agriculture in the land of Israel. Verse 14, "that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil." It was very critical to get the early and late rain, without the early the seed never got established, without the late you never got the fruit, so they were critical rains. If Israel disobeyed God the rains were withheld but when Israel obeyed God the rains came. Spiritual obedience resulted in physical blessing for the nation of Israel in the OT. Also, turn over to Hos 6:3, here's one of latter prophets from The Book of the Twelve we're studying on Wednesday nights, "So let us know, let us press

on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth.” I just wanted to show you this verse because it draws a connection between agriculture and the Lord’s coming just like in James. It just shows the familiarity a Jew like James had with the OT. So, the believer is to patiently expect the Rapture like a farmer patiently expects the precious fruit.

Verse 8, **You too be patient**, that is, like the farmer, the farmer is a good example here to follow. Here, another command to **be patient**, again another aorist denoting urgency. Patience does not need to be put off. Now, in the meantime, as we are waiting what should we be doing? NASB says, **strengthen your hearts**, it’s the Greek word *sterizo*, and it’s another aorist denoting urgency. We should not put off strengthening our hearts. What does it mean to **strengthen**? It means “to establish, to cause something to be inwardly firm.” He means get established in doctrine. While we wait for the Lord we get firm in doctrine. We grow spiritually, we advance to maturity. You don’t sit there and do nothing. So, the analogy with the farmer is that the word of God is planted within the believer at regeneration and as he waits for the Lord to come he studies doctrine and applies what he is learning. There is planting, growing and harvesting. It is not just planting. When you plant you want the early rain to help the seedling grow deep roots. Then you want the plant to take in nutrients from the soil and sun so it can grow to maturity and produce fruit. Finally the harvest takes place and the enjoyment of the good fruit. But you cannot get to the fruit if you do not get a good root. Believers need to be firmly rooted in God’s word so they can grow and advance to spiritual maturity and fruit bearing. Every believer’s fruit will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ and every believer will either be rewarded or suffer loss. It is very serious that we grow from little seedlings to fruit bearing plants because it will affect our position of authority in the Millennial Kingdom and our eternal position before God. So, while we patiently expect the Lord we should be learning Bible doctrine and applying Bible doctrine, as James says, **for the coming of the Lord is near**. The verb **is near** (*eggizo*) is a perfect tense. This is a very important tense here. The perfect means “past completed action with continuing results.” This is symbolized by a point and then a line continuing to the right.



Here it's pointing to "imminence". Imminence is a doctrine related to the rapture that says that Jesus Christ can come at-any-moment. James is saying to his readers, ~42AD that this has been true and remains true for them. Jesus died on the cross in 33AD and then He was resurrected three days later and after 37 more days He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, then the Father and the Son sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the Church began. From that period forward Christ could have come at-any-moment. It's like an event just hanging overhead, just waiting to happen. This was just as true in 42AD for James' readers as it is for us today. We could translate it this way, **for the coming of the Lord has drawn near and remains near**, that's what we mean by imminence. The Second Coming is not imminent, there are definite prophecies that must happen before the Second Coming can happen. But that is not true with the Rapture. There are no prophesied events that must happen before the Rapture takes place.

But what I really want you to see is that this is the reason given for why we should strengthen our hearts, undergo doctrinal training. We should do that because the Lord can return at-any-moment. So, we have to be prepared for that coming and the only way to move into the fruit-bearing stage of Christianity is to advance to spiritual maturity, into what I call true discipleship. Jesus said His true disciples would bear much fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. So, there is a stage of Christianity that is called the fruit-bearing stage and it's when a believer reaches doctrinal maturity. This fits well with the agricultural metaphor because we all know that unless a plant reaches maturity it won't bear much fruit.

Verse 9, **Do not complain**, better "grumble" "mutter" under one's breath. This is another sin of the tongue where we whisper under our breath against our fellow brethren. "oh, he doesn't belong here. Who does he think he is?" Now, we're not called to **complain...against one another**. We are Christians we are called to "love one another". First and greatest commandment, "love God" and the second is like it "love one another". Following these two commands cover a multitude of sins.

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

John 13:35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

John 15:17 “This I command you, that you love one another.

Romans 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*

1 Thessalonians 3:12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

1 John 3:23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

2 John 5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

The NT overwhelmingly commands us to love one another and not complain against one another. Yet how many times do we hear ourselves muttering under our breath some complaint?

Why not grumble against them? James says, **so that you yourselves may not be judged**. There’s a judgment coming for the Christian. This is not a

temporal judgment this is the judgment seat of Christ as we see clearly from the next phrase. **Behold**, in other words, pay attention this is very serious, **the Judge is standing right at the door**. But I thought Jesus was sitting at the Father's right hand? He is. This is a metaphor of imminence again.ⁱ In other words, when Jesus returns at the Rapture of the Church the next event is the judgment seat of Christ. The **Judge** is obviously Jesus Christ because John 5:22 and 27 and Acts 10:42 all say that the Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son. The next event on Christ's prophetic calendar is to Rapture the Church and take her to the judgment seat of Christ. He's standing right at the door. That verb **standing** is again a perfect voice meaning He's standing there and He remains standing there in the sense that this is an imminent event. The moment Christ ascended and established the church on earth this event has been imminent, it can happen at-any-moment. It could have happened in James' day and it can happen in our day, today, this afternoon, during this service. It is imminent and when it happens we will go to the judgment seat of Christ where our deeds will be evaluated.

So, in light of all we have learned about how to handle trials and sufferings we are now to be patiently expectant from now until the Lord comes as the farmer is patiently expectant for the fruit of the earth. In the meantime we are to be strengthening our hearts by studying and applying Bible doctrine in the growth process because the coming of the Lord is near at which point we will immediately go to the judgment seat of Christ to have our fruit evaluated. Finally then we should not complain against one another but rather love one another so that when we reach the judgment seat of Christ we will not be judged for grumbling against them. Behold this event is imminent, it can happen at-any-moment. It has been imminent since the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven and started the Church so we should be continually readying ourselves by the study of doctrine. This means facing trials with doctrinal and grace orientation demonstrating trust in God over the details of life.

ⁱ Additionally, the verb **standing** has less emphasis on standing and more emphasis on being, existing.

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