

Work & Wait: The Power of Patience (James 5:7-12)

It is quite interesting to note that in this epistle, which does not discuss the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the writer emphasizes the coming of the Lord multiple times. We are reminded at least three times that the coming of the Lord is at hand and the believers ought to wait patiently for his advent. The writer, who reminded the believers of the need for stability in the first chapter, re-emphasizes the need for stability if one needs to patiently wait for the advent of Christ. In fact, when we scan the history of the church, we can easily conclude that even when the church had to go through wave after wave of persecution, the only hope of the church was the advent of Christ.

Even though James was one of the siblings of Jesus, he always addressed him as Lord. In fact, we can see there are 14 references of Jesus being called "Lord" in this particular epistle. In the original text the word "*Kurios*" has been used meaning lord, master, etc. This particular term really declares the true character and dignity of Jesus Christ. James, who had a revelation of the Lordship of Jesus, could only address him as Lord, gladly forfeiting his right to be known and called as the Lord's own brother.

"You to be patient..." the word suggests the self restraint that enables one to bear an insult or injury without a hasty retaliation. This sort of patience was manifested in the life of Christ time and again, and God wants his children to have this unique character in them as well. In reference to hardship, James teaches us that we need to be longsuffering. He does not say that we are to be patient as in waiting aimlessly and doing nothing. Patience and procrastination are not the same. Many excuse their laziness with a false definition of patience. The point that James is trying to drive home is that we must be patient in not seeking retaliation or harboring resentment. When we read the admonition that James gives his readers, one may wonder how anyone could have this kind of patience and endurance as he eagerly awaits for the coming of the Lord. As if to answer to these questions, James presents before us three illustrations of patience so that we can emulate and derive inspiration and encouragement from them.

- Learn from the Farmer: vs. 7
- Learn from the Prophets: vs. 10
- Learn from Job: vs. 11

Learn from the Farmer:

The farmer patiently waits for his land to produce precious crops. He does not simply sit, he is not lazy. Instead, he prepares the soil, sows seed and keeps his fields free of grass and weeds. But for the germination of seed and the growth of the plant, he has to trust in the providential care of God. Patience is the key concept that we see in the farmer. Patience, therefore, suggests the attitude of watchful and constant expectancy. So learn from the farmer not only to be patient, but to stand firm as well. This suggests mustering courage or strengthening one's inner being because of the imminent coming of the Lord. The early Christians became impatient, which led them to complain and grumble against one another.

Learn from the Prophets:

When James writes about the Prophets he was perhaps thinking about the OT saints and prophets from Enoch to John the Baptist. Their life stands out as a shining example of those who were patient and long suffering. Despite the fact that they were speaking for the Lord and being obedient to the will of the Lord, they had to go through seasons of suffering, being ostracized, misunderstood, and victims of false accusations. James reminds his readers that the prophets and the people of God that we admire today could never have done their work and borne witness had they not patiently endured. What a comforting thought that others have gone through what we might have to go through! Being obedient to the commands of the Lord does not guarantee us a trouble free life. Because of his perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, Jesus had to bear the cross. Looking at the life of the prophets and saints of the Lord, we can derive encouragement and strength to carry on in our work without faltering or wavering. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4)."