

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
September 16, 2020
James 5:7-11
Waiting

There's that word again. "Patient" Makrothumeō in the Greek meaning 'long spirited', to bear or suffer long. Do you? Are you? Can you? James has just finished berating the wealthy; warning them of the coming judgement. This, mostly for their mistreatment of the poor and the field workers. Obviously these rich folks put money before people. Self before others. In verse 6 he has grouped them among those who put Jesus to death. Their wealth may have been in more than money and possessions. They had the wealth of self importance, self righteousness and social power. Many today would fit that mold. Suddenly, James turns his letter back to his original audience. The scattered believers. See 1:1. Seeing how the world and the worldly have treated them he seeks to urge them on as Christ's followers. We have discussed patience before in this letter but under more of an interpersonal context. See 1:3-4. We saw how through testing, God was training us and developing character in us. The Greek word back there was hupomonē which was a staying under or an endurance during trial and pressure. Now the patience he commands has a connotation of length. Long suffering. Gaining in strength to bear up under pressure is different than suffering long. We can all take pressure but for how long? We are seeing troubling times in America today. The rich and famous indignantly tell us how to live and raise our families. Christians and non Christians alike seem to be helpless in the face of the tragedy and violence in our streets. We long endure the attacks of others who detest our politics and our faith. Christians are turning on each other with misguided anger trying to place blame for the state of our nation. What can we do? How must we react? To Whom can we turn?

If the above lament describes you then today's passage will put all this in perspective. Our point of view must be altered. We may have succeeded or failed at gaining the patience that the Lord has required of us or even at finding balance in our personal interactions with others. James has taught us well but do we listen and change? This is due to being short sighted. A more telescopic view is revealed in the verses we will study today. Reading through verse 7 we might be reminded of a long winter and our desire to finally see green grass and trees. Going through a drought makes us ache to see the rain. Think of the fresh fruit and vegetables that come in their seasons. Compare a fresh garden tomato to those awful green hothouse ones. Though we may be impatient we fully understand the fact that the cycles of the earth have a schedule and a calendar. Let the apples mature. They will be sweetest when ripe. Mankind is in a serious growing pain but we are growing away from our Creator. Can we be patient as we trust the words in verse 8? The part of the cycle we currently endure will certainly and soon come around to the time of fulfillment which we know as The Coming of the Lord.

In verse 8 we are told to exercise our long spirited suffering (Makrothumeō) The Lord is coming soon. We are also told to 'stablish' our hearts. This word 'stērizō' is to set fast or place firmly. So our patience in this context is based in our commitment to firmly place our hearts in Christ. We are already in Christ but we tend to fade. Let us now commit to standing in Him, resolutely setting our souls in trusting God. Waiting patiently for an answer to prayer or some temporal change in our lives is in great contrast to the long patient wait that believers have held

for Jesus to return. Twice in these two verses we find the phrase "Coming of the Lord". The word coming is the Greek 'parousia'. This is a being near, a coming or an arrival. Thayer describes this as "the future visible return from heaven of Jesus, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God". The Lord here is kurios or the Supreme One. Our Lord is our God is our Christ. Our Jesus will return soon to bring justice to this world. Here adds much to this in verses 9-11. As a family of believers whose goal is one of redemption and final unity, why do we grumble and grudge one another. Should not our Heavenly Father finally see us as loving brothers and sisters? We are reminded of the wonderful prophets who suffered and died because they were faithful to God. Christians are treated the same today in much of the world. We should be ashamed of ourselves when we think we suffer for Christ. Because we had an argument over politics or were blamed for right wing values we sometimes want to equate ourselves with those who truly honor Christ and pay the ultimate price. Lastly we are again counted happy if we endure as Job because in enduring and long suffering we will fully comprehend the mercy and pity of our Lord God. Read again the opening verses of James' letter.

Let's dig in to some scripture to deepen our insight into some of today's passage. First, the Coming of the Lord. John 14:3, Matthew 24:27-31, Revelation 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Some scripture on long suffering. 1 Peter 5:8-10, Romans 8:17-19, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 1 Peter 4:12-19, Hebrews 12:3-4. Some scripture on waiting. Psalm 37:7, Isaiah 30:18, Galatians 5:5, Titus 2:13, Romans 12:12, Genesis 49:18. There is no shortage of scripture on these topics. A simple search will reveal God's large love for us along with His compassion to join us in our struggles and fears to lead us to eternal life. May He bless you as you seek to live for Him.