

Anticipating the Lord's Coming

James 5:7-8

1

Introduction

In the first six verses of chapter 5, James rebuked the wicked rich people who abused the righteous poor. In verses 7–11 he shifts his focus from the persecutors to the persecuted. James now instructs the suffering poor as to what attitude they are to have during persecution. The theme of this section is defining how to be patient in trials.

James gives six practical perspectives enabling believers to patiently endure trials: anticipate the Lord's coming, recognize the Lord's judgment, follow the Lord's servants, understand the Lord's blessing, realize the Lord's purpose, and consider the Lord's character.

2

James 5:7-8

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

3

The Hope of His Coming

James 5:7a

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

Last week we studied the hope of Jesus' return. This is the hope of believers. The pain, suffering, persecution, and disappointment of this life are temporary. Jesus is coming again to receive His church to himself. We will live forever in His presence. We must keep our eyes on the finish line and run this race in confidence.

4

The Hope of His Coming

James 5:7a

Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

Peter also encouraged suffering believers to remember their Lord's return, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Christ's return is also a motivation for believers to live Godly. 1 John 3:2-3 explains that because we have the hope of seeing Christ when He appears we will purify ourselves even as He is pure. (2 Pet. 3:14; cf. Phil. 3:16-21; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Titus 2:11-13).

5

The Wait of Patience

James 5:7b

See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Believers need to wait patiently for the second coming. To illustrate this, James gives an illustration of farming.

The husbandman or farmer waits for the precious fruit of the soil. He must be patient. He must wait until he gets the early and late rains. The farmer can do his part of planting his crops, but then he must wait for them to come in. That hope of a future harvest depends on rain and other factors which are outside his control. He must depend upon God's providence to bring together all the elements needed for the crop's growth. These fruits are precious or valuable to the farmer because he depends on them for his existence. All he can do is wait patiently and eagerly for the fruit to grow and ripen so that he can harvest.

6

The Wait of Patience

James 5:7b

See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

James's reference to the "early and latter rains" shows just how long farmers had to patiently wait. The early rains in Israel arrive at the time of the fall planting season (October and November), the late rains just before harvest time (March and April).

7

The Imminency of His Coming

James 5:8

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

In application to the readers, James states that they (we) also must be patient. Just as the farmer waits patiently through the entire growing season for his crop, so also are believers to wait patiently for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul addressed a similar exhortation to the Galatians: "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9).

8

The Imminency of His Coming

James 5:8

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James further exhorted his readers to “establish your hearts”.

“Establish” means “to strengthen,” “to make fast,” or “to confirm.” In Luke 9:51 this term is used to describe Jesus’ resolute determination to go to Jerusalem, although He knew He faced death when He arrived there. It is a word denoting an attitude of commitment to stay the course no matter how severe the trial. James urges those about to collapse under the weight of persecution to prop themselves up with the hope of the Savior’s return.

9

The Imminency of His Coming

James 5:8

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The idea is for believers to realize that their trouble is temporary. It will end when Jesus returns. Though Jesus would not return in the lifetime of the recipients of this epistle, nor in the lifetimes of millions of other believers who have lived and died since, we are to live in the anticipation that He may come at any moment. The idea here is that the next event on God’s schedule for Christ is the deliverance of believers from this world with all its troubles. This is the message of comforting hope for the church in every age (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

10

The Imminency of His Coming

James 5:8

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

James emphasizes this imminency by reminding his readers of the hope that “the coming of the Lord is at hand”. The verb translated “at hand” means “to draw near,” “to approach,” or “to come close.” The return of Christ is the next event on God’s prophetic calendar and could happen at any moment. He delays His return because God is still redeeming those whom He “chose ... in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4).

11

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12

2 Peter 3:1-9

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

13

So What ...

We may face problems, but we must never surrender. Jesus is coming again. We must remain faithful knowing that there is a glorious future waiting for us.

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

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