

Patience can be a hard lesson to learn. But we need patience in a broad variety of difficult circumstances. James introduced the need for patience after having encouraged his readers with a warning against the ungodly rich. Some who were rich were oppressing believers. In this context James calls his readers to be patient. But his readers and we need patience in many other contexts. James gives his readers instructions concerning patience which we can group them together into four sets.

I. *Be patient and strengthen your hearts (5:7-8).*

1. *What does James mean to be patient?* The patience to which James calls us is an inwardly quiet waiting. The first word which James uses for patience stresses the inward quiet which one should have as one waits. The patient person holds their spirit in check and does not with hate or bitterness or despair. Such an inward quiet waiting should naturally be seen in our outward response.
2. *What does this patience look like?* The farmer illustrates the patience we should have. The farmer had to wait for the normal cycle of rain to come. We, too, must wait for things to happen until the Lord returns.
3. *What strengthens us to wait quietly?* The imminent appearance of Jesus motivates us. The coming of the Lord is a day of judgment when things will be set right. It is something positive for those who are right with God but should horrify those who are in rebellion against God.

II. *Don't grumble against each other or be judged (5:9-10).*

1. *What does James here perceive to be grumbling?* We grumble when we inwardly sigh or groan about others.
2. *What does patience free of grumbling look like?* Among the prophets are examples of those who served God under suffering but without grumbling. The prophets were God's messengers who spoke in the name of the Lord, yet people had stone and persecuted them. Never-the-less they continued in ministry and did not complain against God.
3. *What should motivate us to avoid such grumbling?* The imminent appearance of Jesus as Judge should motivate us to guard against judgmental thinking. Grumbling in this fashion is judging others. We are condemning them in our hearts for their actions. But all judgment is given to Jesus (John 5:22). Don't presume to do what He will do when He comes.

III. *Endure and be blessed (5:11).*

The third set of instructions refers to Job, another Old Testament character. It introduces another word for patience, since Job was not particularly free of grumbling.

1. *What is the additional nature of patience which James introduces here?* James focuses now on perseverance or endurance in which we do not break under suffering.
2. *What should motivate us to persevere under suffering?* God promises that when we endure, we will be blessed. Believers do not suffer for the sake of suffering, but to remain faithful to Jesus. Cf. Matthew 5:11 – "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." (NIV)

IV. *Don't swear or else be condemned (5:12).*

The fourth and final set of instructions may seem at first to introduce a new thought. But there are reasons to consider this as part of the previous verses: (1) the conjunction, (2) the comparison, "above all else" is best understood in the context, and (3) the unspoken negative example of Peter.

1. *What does James means by "swearing"?* James forbids us taking an oath to establish our truthfulness. "Swear" does not mean bad language, but making an "oath." The Jews made oaths to support their claims, but often found ways to break their word. Peter denied knowing Jesus with an oath (Mat. 26:72).
2. *What should motivate us to avoid making oaths?* Resorting to oaths to establish our truthfulness brings condemnation because it breaks faith with God.
 - a. It breaks faith when we take an oath by anything other than God, because it wrongly excludes God.
 - b. It breaks faith with God when we take an oath by God in a manner that assumes or requires Him to act other than what He has revealed. It fails to acknowledge Him as Sovereign Lord whom we cannot command.
 - c. It breaks faith when we as children of the God of truth take oaths to establish our truthfulness. As children of God we should be truthful in character as God is truthful.

James challenges the readers and us to be patient. It can be hard, but children of God have help. God has changed the hearts of His children to want to be patient. He has given His Spirit to all who are truly His children and the Spirit produces in the child of God love, joy, peace, and patience. Nothing is impossible with God. And to be patient is to our benefit and to God's glory.