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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“PATIENCE AND HOPE”

James 5:7-11

- {Casting Crowns, “Praise You in This Storm”}

**I was sure by now
God, You would have reached down
And wiped our tears away
Stepped in and saved the day
But once again, I say “Amen,”
and it’s still raining**

“**It’s still raining**” when you plead with God and *still* you suffer with chronic pain, or the cancer metastasizes, or dementia robs you of your past and your earthly future.

“**It’s still raining**” when you spend hours on your knees before the Lord and *still* your child is hell-bent on destroying his or her life with alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity.

“**It’s still raining**” when you faithfully intercede for your city and *still* a 16-year-old is shot and killed because she was in the wrong car at the wrong time.

Christ Jesus warns us: {Jn 16:33} “**In this world you will have trouble,**” then he adds, “**But take heart! I have overcome the world.**” “**Take heart!**” “Have faith!”

But what does it mean to have faith when “**It’s still raining**”? What does biblical faith look like {“Praise You”} “**As the thunder rolls**”? What is the substance and evidence of real faith, faith that is alive and active and powerful to save, when we can “**barely hear [God] whisper through the rain, ‘I’m with you’**”?

- Please turn with me to James 5:7-11.

■ Authentic faith in the storm looks like a farmer waiting “**for the land to yield its valuable crop**” (verse 7). Farmers work from before dawn until after dusk to sow their seed, and then again to harvest their crop. In between there are months of waiting.

■ Authentic faith in the storm looks like “**the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord**” (verse 10). Faithful prophets of the LORD obeyed his commands and preached his message. Some foretold future events that did not happen until centuries after they died. All of the prophets called Israel to repentance and renewed obedience: sometimes they were heard; more often they were ignored, rejected, and abused.

■ Authentic faith in the storm looks like Job (verse 11). He was the richest man in the East. More than that, he {Job 1:1} “**was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.**” Yet God permitted all of Job’s wealth to be destroyed or stolen, most of his servants to die, and all ten of his sons and daughters to be killed – all within a matter of minutes. Then he allowed Satan to afflict {Job 2:7} “**Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.**” Job’s wife suggested he {Job 2:9} “**Curse God and die!**” He answered, {Job 2:10; 13:15} “**Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.**”

⊗ What quality do the farmer, the prophets, and Job have in common? It is **perseverance**.

📖 Perseverance is sticking to it, whatever comes.

Perseverance is continuing in the same course of action for a long time. Perseverance is doing your best to complete a task despite difficulties or discouragement. Synonyms for perseverance include words like doggedness, steadfastness, firmness, resolve, insistence, determination, and persistence. If endurance is standing your ground in the hurricane, perseverance is striding forward through the hurricane.

Godly perseverance in and through trial and tribulation is the substance and evidence of Christian faith that is alive and active and powerful to save.

⚙ According to James, godly perseverance has two basic components: patience and hope in God.

■ James 5:7: **“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters.”** Verse 8: **“You too, be patient and stand firm.”** Verse 10: **“Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience...take the prophets.”**

◆ Our patience is tried by *delays*. It’s hard to wait for Christmas. It’s hard to wait until you are 16 to drive. It’s hard to wait to go to college or trade school and start your career and move into a place of your own. But often the reward is worth the wait, and most of the time we have no choice but to wait.

Some kinds of waiting are even harder.

○ I am talking about waiting for God to bring {Php 1:6} **“to completion”** the **“good work”** he has begun in us, to fulfill his ultimate purpose of conforming us {Rom 8:29} **“to the image of his Son.”**

○ I am talking about waiting for the day when {Rev 21: 3-4} **“God’s dwelling place”** will be **“among the people”** and **“He will wipe every tear from [our] eyes”** and **“there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”**

■ It is hard to wait for the best things – but in the end, God is glorified and we are the better for it. That is why James says in verse 7, **“Be patient ... See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.”**

◆ Our patience is tried by *people*.

This one hardly needs elaboration, does it? Think back to the last time you lost your temper. The odds are your anger was triggered by someone’s carelessness, incompetence, or wrongdoing.

■ It is hard to be patient with people. That is why James says in verse 9, **“Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The judge is standing at the door!”**

◆ Our patience is tried by *suffering*.

This point doesn’t need any more expansion than the last one. Look at it this way: who here finds it difficult to put up with good health, physical comfort, material affluence, and social harmony? But suffering – we all want that to end yesterday.

■ It is hard to patient in suffering. Hence James commends the prophets in verse 10 and Job in verse 11b.

† The Lord Jesus understands this. His patience was stretched as he waited 30 years to begin his

mission. It was stretched when his family refused to accept him, his disciples failed him, his people misconstrued him, and his enemies hated him. It was stretched when he was betrayed, denied, beaten, whipped, spat upon, and crucified. And still he prayed, {Lk 22:42} **“yet not my will, but yours be done.”**

Aren't you glad he was patient? But patience was not enough for the Savior, nor is it enough for us.

We also need hope.

By itself, patience can easily deteriorate into mere endurance or passive resignation. Hope transforms patience into active movement forward.

By itself, patience can degrade into grim and dour determination. Hope elevates patience into a positive, and even quietly joyous, virtue.

But we do not hope for hope's sake. Our hope rests firmly in the Sovereign Lord. James identifies three specific reasons to hope in the Lord.

■ He names two reasons in verse 11: **“You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.”**

☆ Reason 1) God is ready and able to redeem our suffering. After all of Job's affliction and misery God restored what he lost. Better than that, Job came out of his tribulation a new man. As deeply as he trusted and loved God before, his trust and love were deeper afterward. As righteous as he was before, he was more righteous afterward.

○ James 1:2-3 {TNIV} calls us to **“Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because**

you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” There is that element of joy.

☆ Reason 2) God is compassionate and merciful. God sees and knows and cares about us in every circumstance. Our joys and griefs, successes and failures, struggles and victories matter to him.

■ Verses 7-8: **“Be patient...until the Lord’s coming stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”**

☆ Reason 3) God will be victorious, and we will share his victory. At just the right time the {1 Th 4:16-17} **“Lord”** Jesus **“himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.”** His Second Advent will set in motion a series of events: **“the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with in the clouds to meet the Lord... And...we will be with the Lord forever.”**

The Risen Christ will {1 Co 15:25} **“put all his enemies under his feet.”** {Rev 11:15} **“The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”** And we {1 Th 4:17} **“will be with the Lord forever.”**

God is ready and able to redeem our suffering. He is compassionate and merciful. He will be victorious. What better reasons are there to hope?

Hope plus patience equals perseverance. Godly perseverance in and through trial and tribulation is the substance and evidence of Christian faith that is alive and active and powerful to save.

{Casting Crowns, "Praise You in This Storm"}

**But once again, I say "Amen,"
and it's still raining**

**But as the thunder rolls
I barely hear You whisper through the rain
"I'm with you"**

**And as Your mercy falls
I raise my hands and praise the God
who gives**

And takes away

**And I'll praise You in this storm
And I will lift my hands
For You are who You are
No matter where I am
And every tear I've cried
You hold in your hand
You never left my side
And though my heart is torn
I will praise You in this storm**