

# JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

## LIVING VICTORIOUSLY IN THE “LAST DAYS” – JAMES 5:7-8

### 1. REVIEW

A. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE ON THE DAY JESUS ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN HIS FOLLOWERS WERE WITH HIM... EYEWITNESSES!

1. I'M GUESSING THAT JAMES WAS THERE, TOO.

a. NOTE: JAMES WAS AN UNBELIEVER UNTIL THE RESURRECTION, HOWEVER, AFTER THE RESURRECTION, HE BELIEVED!

1) AND BECAME THE LEADER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

2) “OLD CAMEL KNEES”

2. DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE ANGEL TOLD THEM?...

a. Acts 1:9-11 (NLT2) After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

3. IT'S FAIR TO ASSUME THAT EVERYONE WHO HEARD THOSE WORDS, INCLUDING JAMES, ACCEPTED THEM AS FACT AND WONDERED EXACTLY WHEN WILL THAT BE?

4. NOTE: THE FACT OF JESUS' RETURN WAS STILL ON JAMES' MIND ABOUT 15 YEARS LATER WHEN HE WROTE...

2. James 5:7-8 (NASB) Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

A. James 5:7-8 GIVES THREE CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD DEVELOP IN ORDER TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY IN “THE LAST DAYS”.

1. DISCUSS: SANCTIFICATION.

2. NOTE: IF WE DO NOT DEVELOP THESE THREE CHARACTER TRAITS, WE MAY BECOME DISCOURAGED, OR INSENSITIVE AS TIME GOES ON... AND WILL NOT MATURE AS FAST SPIRITUALLY.

B. BE READY.

C. BE PATIENT.

D. BE STRONG.

3. BE READY:

A. THE BIBLE REFERS TO THE “SECOND COMING” AND THE “LAST DAYS”, 1,500 TO 1,800 TIMES!

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1. **WHY: ARE THERE SO MANY REMINDERS???**
    - a. **BECAUSE: ... GOD WANTS US TO BE READY!**
  - B. **QUESTION? ARE WE THERE YET... ARE WE LIVING IN THE “LAST DAYS”?**
    1. **THE BIBLICAL ANSWER: IS “YES”, WE ARE LIVING IN THE “LAST DAYS” ... HOWEVER, WE’VE BEEN IN THE “LAST DAYS” FOR 2,000 YEARS!!**
      - a. **TECHNICALLY, THE “LAST DAYS” ARE THE DAYS BETWEEN THE FIRST COMING AND THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.**
  - C. **SCRIPTURE: “BE READY” ...**
    1. **Matthew 24:44 (NLT2)** You also must **be ready** all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.
    2. **Luke 12:40 (NASB)** "You too, **be ready**; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."
    3. **1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always **being ready** to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
    4. **1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 (NLT2)** But you aren’t in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won’t be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night. So **be on your guard**, not asleep like the others. **Stay alert** and be clearheaded.
  - D. **EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD LIVE INTENTIONALLY IN THE AWARENESS OF THE CERTAINTY OF JESUS’ RETURN!!**
4. **BE PATIENT:**
- A. **James 5:7 (NLT2)** “Dear brothers and sisters, **be patient** as you **wait for the Lord’s return**. Consider the **farmers** who **patiently wait** for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They **eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen**.
  - B. **SCRIPTURE GIVES MANY PROMISES THAT JESUS IS GOING TO RETURN, AND THAT HE’S COMING SOON... BUT “SOON” HAS GONE FROM 15 YEARS TO 2,000 YEARS... SO JAMES ADDED THE CAUTION “BE PATIENT”.**
    1. **... BECAUSE WAITING IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT.**
      - a. **THINK CHILDREN AND CHRISTMAS DAY!**
  - C. **JAMES ALSO USED THE WORD MEANING “PATIENT” IN CHAPTER 1.**
    1. **James 1:2-4 (NKJV)** “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces **patience**. But let **patience** have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
    2. **IN CHAPTER 1 THE WORD MEANS “PERSEVERANCE” OR “ENDURANCE” IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES... “TRIALS”.**
      - a. **THE WORD TRANSLATED “PATIENCE” COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD MAKROTHYMEŌ, REFERRING TO THE ABILITY TO WAIT IN**

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**TRANQUILITY... AND “TO STAY PUT AND STAND FAST WHEN YOU WOULD LIKE TO RUN AWAY!”**

b. **DISCUSS: WHY “PATIENCE” IS IMPORTANT DURING DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.**

D. **IN CHAPTER 2 JAMES USES THE WORD FOR “PATIENCE” AGAIN AND RELATES PATIENCE TO FARMERS.**

1. **ONE REASON JAMES MAY HAVE USED FARMERS AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF PATIENCE IS THAT CLEMENT, AN EARLY CHURCH LEADER IN THE CHURCH IN ROME, WROTE THAT JAMES AND HIS BROTHER JUDE WERE BOTH FARMERS.**

E. **FARMERS PLANT AFTER PREPARING THE SOIL... BUT THE RESULTS ARE OUT OF THEIR CONTROL... THEY HAVE TO LEAVE THE GROWING TO GOD.**

1. **AN EARLY FROST WILL KILL THE CROP.**

2. **TOO MUCH RAIN WILL ROT THE CROP.**

3. **TOO LITTLE RAIN WILL WITHER THE CROP.**

4. **TOO MUCH SUN WILL BURN THE CROP.**

5. **TOO LITTLE SUN WILL RETARD THE CROP.**

a. **FACT: FARMERS HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE WEATHER.**

6. **FARMERS PLANT IN THE GROUND... AND THEN WAIT... BECAUSE THE RESULTS ARE OUT OF THEIR CONTROL.**

a. **WAITING CALLS FOR “PATIENCE” THROUGHOUT THE GROWING SEASON.**

F. **NOTE: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ALSO ABOUT PATIENCE AS WE WAIT DURING THE SANCTIFICATION PROCESS... WHICH IS OUR GROWING SEASON... TO BECOME MORE SPIRITUALLY MATURE.**

1. **REMEMBER: SANCTIFICATION IS A P-R-O-C-E-S-S, NOT AN EVENT LIKE JUSTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION... SO IT TAKES T – I – M – E... AND TIME MEANS WAITING... AND WAITING TAKES PATIENCE.**

a. **THAT IS WHY JAMES USED THE EXPERIENCE OF FARMERS AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF PATIENCE.**

2. **AND... “THAT STARTS WITH A “T” AND IT RHYMES WITH A “P” AND THAT STANDS FOR PATIENCE!”**

G. **TRUTH: BEING PATIENT IN NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES MEANS WE MUST DELIBERATELY ALLOW GOD TO HANDLE THE SITUATION IN HIS OWN WAY AND IN HIS OWN TIME.**

1. **LIKE THE FARMER WAITING FOR A HARVEST... BE PATIENT.**

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- H. **DISCUSS: WHY YOU BELIEVE PATIENCE TO BE AN IMPORTANT “LESSON IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY”.**
5. **BE STRONG: IS THE THIRD WAY TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY IN THE “LAST DAYS”.**
- A. James 5:8 (NASB) You too be patient; **strengthen your hearts**, for the coming of the Lord is near.
- B. AT THE BEGINNING OF VERSE 8, JAMES CONTINUES THE PREVIOUS THOUGHT... " You too be patient" ... PERIOD... THEN, NEW THOUGHT... "strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near."
- C. **“STRENGTHEN YOUR HEARTS” RELATES TO HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND WHEN WE’VE BEEN WRONGED.**
1. THE GREEK WORD FOR **“STRENGTHEN”** IS **STĒRIZŌ** AND IT MEANS TO **ESTABLISH, SUPPORT, OR FIX SOMETHING FIRMLY IN PLACE** SO IT’S **IMMOVABLE.**
  2. IT IS THE SAME WORD USED IN Luke 9:51 FOR **STEADFASTLY.**
    - a. Luke 9:51 (NKJV) Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He **steadfastly** set His face to go to Jerusalem,
  3. **“STEADFAST” ALSO MEANS, RESOLUTE COURAGE, A DETERMINATION TO STAY THE COURSE, NO MATTER HOW SEVERE THE TRIAL.**
  4. **NOTE: IT IS IN THE COMMAND FORM BOTH IN ENGLISH AND GREEK.**
    - a. ... SO JAMES IS GIVING HIS READERS A **COMMAND, NOT A SUGGESTION** TO... **“STRENGTHEN YOUR OWN HEARTS.”**
- D. THE **50-20 PRINCIPLE**: GETS ITS NAME FROM **GENESIS 50:20.**
1. REMEMBER THE **STORY OF JACOB’S BROTHERS WANTING TO KILL HIM, BUT SELLING HIM INTO SLAVERY?**
  2. WHEN THE SAME BROTHERS SHOW UP ON THE SCENE AGAIN MUCH LATER, **GROVELING FOR MERCY... HOW DOES JOSEPH RESPOND?**
    - a. WITH THE **“50-20 PRINCIPLE”**: “As for you, you meant evil against me, **BUT GOD** meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” - **Genesis 50:20.**
  3. **UNLESS WE CAN SEE BEYOND THOSE WHO WRONG US, WE WILL RETALIATE... THAT’S THE NATURAL (AND CARNAL) REACTION.**
    - a. **“BUT GOD” WORKS OUT ALL THINGS FOR OUR ULTIMATE GOOD... IF WE WILL ALLOW HIM.**
    - b. **FACT: WE DON’T NEED “20/20” VISION... WE NEED “50-20” VISION!**

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- 1) THE **SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE** FROM OUR **OWN LIMITED VIEW** OF THINGS TO **GOD’S DIVINE VIEWPOINT** HAS HELPED **“STRENGTHEN” MANY HEARTS** THROUGH ALL KINDS OF **WRONGS**.

#### E. **CONSIDER: SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS BOTH A DIVINE PROVISION AND A HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.**

1. **GOD PROVIDES THE STRENGTH THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT... BUT IT’S ALSO A HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT.**
2. **NOTE: THE BIBLE KNOWS NOTHING OF THE PASSIVE SPIRITUALITY THAT WE HEAR WHEN PEOPLE SAY, “LET GO AND LET GOD.”**
  - a. **NO! ... THE BIBLE SAYS, GET BUSY, WALK THE WALK, WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION!**
  - b. **THEREFORE: SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS NOT ACCIDENTAL... IT IS ALWAYS INTENTIONAL.**
    - 1) **EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD LIVE INTENTIONALLY IN THE AWARENESS OF THE CERTAINTY OF JESUS’ RETURN!!**
3. **TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY... GOD DOES THE OPERATION THAT REQUIRES OUR COOPERATION.**
  - a. **THERE MUST BE HUMAN COOPERATION ALONG WITH THE DIVINE OPERATION.**
4. **HERE IS AN EXAMPLE FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID:**
  - a. **1 Samuel 30:6 (NASB) Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**
  - b. **AT TIMES WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OURSELVES BECAUSE THE VOICES OF THE WORLD AND THOSE INSIDE OUR HEAD, ARE NOT TELLING US THE TRUTH...**
    - 1) **THEY MUST BE COUNTERED WITH GOD’S TRUTH.**

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2) THAT'S WHAT JAMES MEANS WHEN HE SAYS, "strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near."

3) JUST AS DAVID "STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD."

5. HERE IS ONE MORE ILLUSTRATION THAT SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS BOTH A DIVINE PROVISION AND A HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

a. A SURGEON PERFORMS AN OPERATION ON YOU... BUT HE DOES NOT SAY WHEN YOU GO HOME...

1) "YOU'RE ALL WELL NOW... DO ANYTHING YOU WANT TO DO!"

b. HE DOES SAY... I'VE DONE THE SURGERY, BUT...

1) MY OPERATION IS GOING TO REQUIRE YOUR COOPERATION:

i. "WHEN YOU GO HOME, TAKE THE MEDICATIONS, WALK ONE MILE A DAY, DO EXERCISES, AND GO TO PHYSICAL THERAPY."

c. SO... THE SURGEON DOES THE OPERATION, HOWEVER.....  
HIS OPERATION REQUIRES OUR COOPERATION.

d. THAT'S THE IDEA JAMES 5:8: BE STRONG... STRENGTHEN YOURSELF.

F. TRUTH: AS THIS WORLD BECOMES MORE EVIL, AS THE ELECTION CYCLES MAKE US MORE DIVIDED THAN EVER, AS THE GAP BETWEEN THE PROMISE TO RETURN AND THE ACTUAL RETURN GROWS IN LENGTH... WE NEED TO BE MORE READY, MORE PATIENT, AND STRONGER.

1. WITHOUT THOSE THREE ELEMENTS, WE WILL GROW WEARY... SO, BE READY. BE PATIENT. BE STRONG.

a. Galatians 6:9 (NASB) "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

6. CONSIDER: ONE REASON WE CAN BE READY, AND BE PATIENT, AND BE STRONG IS BECAUSE OF OUR FAITH... AND BECAUSE OF OUR FAITH WE HAVE HOPE!

A. Hebrews 11:1 (NASB) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

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- B. Jeremiah 20:11-13 (NIV) “For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
- C. HOPE CHANGES EVERYTHING!