

16. Learning to Be Patient

In our last topic, we saw that we need to help our children learn to avoid the dangers of riches. The riches of this earth are very temporary. In contrast, the rewards of the Lord are eternal. That is why we want to help our children learn to place their focus on the things that are eternal instead of the temporary things that will only last for a short time on this earth. It requires patience to keep our eyes on the things that are eternal, because the rewards do not come immediately. As a result, one of the things we want to show our physical and spiritual children is why it is very important to learn to be patient. That will be the focus of our topic today.

James 5:7-8 says, “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. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” In 1 Corinthians 13:4, we learn that the first characteristic of love is patience. Here, we see that James tells us how long we should be patient as Christians. He reminds us that we are to be patient until the coming of the Lord. This same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, where we read, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” Here, we see that we are to be patient with all. This means that we are to be patient with all people, whether or not they are Christians. Since the previous verses talk about the rich, we are to be patient with others, even when they take advantage of us.

James gives us an illustration of patience. The illustration is of a farmer planting his crops. Christ used a similar illustration, in Mark 4:26-29, where we read, “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” A farmer waits many months after he plants the seed before he is able to harvest the crop. He has to show patience while he waits for the seed to grow and the fruit to develop.

James adds one additional thing to this illustration. He points out the fact that the farmer has to wait for both the early rain and the later rain. In the land of Israel, the farmers would plant their crops in the fall, so they would get the early rains that came in October and November. That was the rain that caused the plants to grow. Then, the later rain came in March and April. It was these later rains that caused the fruit to form and mature on the plants. Without the later rain, there would be very little fruit, or the fruit would be very small. As a result, the farmer had to wait until he got the later rain, as well as the earlier rain.

Just like the farmer, we are to be patient as we wait for the coming of the Lord. We also want to show our children how to serve the Lord as we patiently wait for Him. Galatians 6:9-10 says, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Together with our physical and spiritual children, we want to look for opportunities to do good as we wait for the Lord to come. As we have mentioned in other topics,

the word “good” means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. We want to practice this goodness toward all people, whether or not they are Christians. This will help those who are not Christians to see love in action. It will help us to function as a body as we minister to Christians.

We are also told to establish our hearts. The word that is translated “establish” means *to strengthen or to make firm*. This word is used in 2 Peter 1:12-13, where we read, “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*.” Peter knew that the Christians to whom he was writing were established in the truth, but he wanted to keep reminding them so they would continue to stand strong. In the same way, we want to help our children continue to stand strong in the Lord and His Word. As we minister to our children, we want to help them follow the instructions of 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, where we read, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The Lord wants both us, and them, to have an effective ministry both by our words and by our works, because the Lord is coming soon.

We are also told to avoid one thing as we wait for the coming of the Lord. James 5:9 says, “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” The word that is translated “grumble” means *to groan or to complain against each other*. Philippians 2:14-16 says, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” We want to help our children learn to shine as lights in a world that is full of complaining. We will know that our lives have made an impact as we see our children shine as lights by sharing the Word of life.

We are also given examples of people in the Bible who showed great patience. James 5:10-11 says, “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” The first example we are given of patience would be the example of the Old Testament prophets. Hebrews 11:35-37 gives us a short summary of what the prophets suffered when those verses say, “Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented...” In spite of what they suffered, the prophets showed patience and endured all of these things.

A second example is the example that was given by Job. One day, Job learned, in just a very short period of time, that all of his oxen and donkeys were destroyed; all of his sheep had been burned

up; all of his camels had been stolen; and all ten of his children had been killed. In spite of what he had just suffered, Job 1:20-22 says, “Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” Here, we see that Job accepted, with patience, what God had allowed Satan to do in his life.

Later, Satan was allowed to cover the body of Job with boils. Then, his wife told him to curse God and die. Job 2:9-10 tells us the words of his wife and how Job responded, “Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Here, we see that in spite of what his wife had just said, Job showed patience by accepting the fact that he should accept adversity, as well as good, from God.

After losing everything he had and having his wife turn against him, the friends of Job came to visit him. They sat for seven days and said nothing. Then, for the next thirty-five chapters, they took turns telling Job that he must be a very sinful man for God to do such things to him. In fact, part of them even claimed to have received a message from God. In spite of all the words his friends had spoken against him, Job showed patience and did not blame God for his suffering. By what he did, Job gave all of us an example of patience, even in the middle of suffering. Instead, by the end of the book, we see that Job had learned that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

James tells us one of the ways we can show patience and show our children how to show patience. James 5:12 says, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ and *your* ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.” Here, we see two ways in which we can provide an example of patience to our children. First, we can show patience by avoiding any oath where we try to back our words by anything in the heavens or the earth. Second, we can show our patience by being people who keep our word. We are to be people who say “yes” only when we mean “yes” and say “no” when we mean “no”. Then, we put our “yes” or our “no” into action by doing or avoiding what we said we should do or avoid. In this way, we are giving our children an example of how to practice patience in their own lives.

The world around us does not model patience and it does not practice patience. Our physical and spiritual children will only learn to practice patience, in their own lives, as we give them an example to follow. As they see us model patience by waiting patiently, just like a farmer waits, refusing to grumble and complain about others, and following those who showed patience in the Old Testament, our children will see how to practice patience in their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example of patience for your physical and spiritual children to follow.