

"Patience's Perfect Work"

James 1:1-4

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“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (Jas 1:1-4 AV)

Before we begin, I want to say a few things about the book of James, and about James himself. Some of these observations come from Daniel Doriani, who taught the book of James for many years at Covenant Seminary. His book on James is a fine exposition of the teaching of James, especially in the light of the modern controversy, which is an old controversy. We will try to illuminate this as we continue. A few preliminary things:

1. I am not going to haggle over who the author was. I suspect it was James who presided over the council of Jerusalem and who supported Peter and Paul in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, thus the gospel of grace. The book is full of grace and mercy, but also very precise on the relationship between faith and obedience.
2. Doriani suggests several ways of looking at James, ways that have merit, in my view.
 - a. It is wisdom literature, akin to Proverbs and other wisdom literature of the Bible. It teaches us how to get through the world without making a fool of ourselves. Wisdom is a key subject of the book.
 - b. It is prophetic literature: it breathes the air of the prophets of old, as we shall see.
 - c. It is meditation literature, on the meaning of our Lord’s words. It breathes the words of our Lord Jesus.

There are three things this morning, as introduction to this new series of sermons, sermons on the book of James. These things come from James 1:1-4.

- I. Patience comes from the test of faith.
- II. Patience perfects the child of God so that he lacks nothing.
- III. Patience rejoices in enduring temptations and trials.

- I. Patience comes from the test of faith.
 - A. Gold and silver must be purified in the fire.

“14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Re 3:14-19)
 - B. Peter speaks of the same thing.

“6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:” (1Pe 1:6-7)

C. David would not even go into battle without a weapon that he had not proved.

1. He refused Saul’s sword

2. Jesus warned us about untested decisions and affirmations:

“25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any [man] come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Lu 14:25-35)

D. So it is said of Christ. He would be a refiner and purifier of silver and gold. Otherwise our offerings will not be acceptable to God.

“And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.” (Mal 3:3)

E. Please note: the fire cannot turn any base metal to gold. It cannot make something from nothing. Fires burn up and destroy that which is not faith; and so trials reveal what is not genuine. But if the gold is there, it will come out better and purer. Trials do not produce the gold; trials discover and reveal it.

F. So when faith is tested, the result is patience. One of the attributes of true faith is that it endures and does not quit when the battle gets tough. “If you faint in the day of battle, your strength is weak.” Patience is keeping on keeping on.

G. You will never know when the trials will come. Esau—the most important day of his life came without warning; David, walking on his roof; Solomon, expanding his kingdom and making his treaties; The Rich Young Ruler coming to Christ; Judas Iscariot, frustrated with the talk of suffering and crucifixion. Etc. The defining moment of your life may come when you least expect it.

II. Patience Perfects the child of God. It is God’s will that you grow up to maturity and adulthood, as we have been speaking of in the last few weeks. It is not how you start out; it is how you end up.

A. Parable of the sower and seed: wayside; shallow ground; thorny ground. All failed to produce real faith. Some didn’t sprout at all; some was burned by the sun revealing it to be shallow; Some choked by the cares of life.

B. What does it mean to be perfected: it means that sin is subdued in you; put under the yoke of Christ. You are brought under the yoke of obedience to Christ. You cannot pick and choose what to obey and what not to obey. Sin must be subdued.

C. Patience is a form of discipline. You wait and endure You are long suffering. You must see the fruit mature and ripen in your life and in others. This is not a patient age. We want it all now. It is a gambler’s mentality.

D. The decree of God, or the roll of the dice.

E. Patience looks ahead to the harvest; it is willing to wait. Teaching takes time to be implanted, to be watered and nurtured. Note the following:

1. Ec 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

2. 1Tim. 3:

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

3. James 5:

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

F. Faith only comes to perfection by patience; Jesus put it this way:

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Joh 8:31-32)

III. Patience rejoices in enduring temptations and trials

A. It does not rejoice in the suffering and pain, for these are evil things.

B. It rejoices in the fact of temptations for this is an evidence of true faith and sonship.

“11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” (Pr 3:11-12)

C. “LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.” (Isa 26:16)

D. As Hebrews puts it:

“1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” (Heb 12:1-17)

E. It is an extremely important thing to know that you have the evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for. This is what James is all about. A perfect little book about the necessity of a tested and real faith.

May God bless you.

Amen and Amen.