

Suffering Like Job

James 5:9-11

Through the first four chapters, James has spotlighted the sins of the church. They were showing partiality favoring the rich over the poor, withholding resources from those in need, and using their words to cut and hurt each other. James boldly states that these attitudes and actions are contrary to the faith they were claiming to hold, writing that *“This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic”* (3:15).

This contrast between two different lifestyles is a theme in the Bible. We see it described as the kingdom of this world compared to the kingdom of God.

Kingdom of This World:

- We are the most significant person in the kingdom
- We protect what we value
- There is no sacrifice too great to achieve what we desire
- Happiness is the most important outcome of our life

Here is how Paul describes the kingdom of this world: “Works of the flesh.”

*Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,
Gal. 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,
Gal. 5:21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Compare this to the Kingdom of God:

- Others are the most significant
 - Phil. 2:3 *in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
- We protect what God values
 - Eph. 4:2-3 *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
- We sacrifice our lives for others
 - 1John 3:16 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*
- Joy is the most important outcome of our life
 - John 15:11 *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Go back to Galatians 5 and contrast the flesh with the fruits of the Spirit: Works of the Spirit

*Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
Gal. 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

QUESTION: What do you think causes problems in most relationships?

When you read of the suffering the early church endured, one could see how there would be issues within the church. Pain squeezes what is truly down inside of us. We naturally blurt out as a reaction what is in our hearts. Trials have a way of slowly grinding down our capacity to hide their existence. Sooner or later, we give in to the pressure, and our sinful hearts come gushing forward.

James never in his letter provides a means of relief for those in pain, only words pointing to a new reality.

James 5:7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

James 5:8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Suffering is to be met with patience. Not just patience for the sake of creating a good virtue within us but connected to a real promise. Our eternal restoration into the presence of the Christ, perfect and without pain or suffering. We always assume suffering means something is wrong. James seems to give the indication that it is expected and anticipated (James 1:2).

When James uses both the prophets and Job as examples of those who suffered, the point is hard to swallow. They suffered not from their own actions but the sinful actions of others.

Heb. 11:36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—

Heb. 11:38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

The writer of Hebrews then makes a connection several verses later:

Heb. 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

QUESTION: Why is it hard for us to read “be patient” instead of “fight back?”

QUESTION: How would James's message of patience within the congregation create unity?

James 5:11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

QUESTION: Why is it hard to see that God is “compassionate and merciful” even though our suffering remains?

We often don't see the compassion of God given by the family of God. By the power of the Spirit within all of us, we can share the love and compassion of our God. While we wait for him to complete his work, we can care for each other. When we live in the kingdom of self, always trying to fix our suffering, we will never have the time or awareness of those around us. This is why James calls us to see our suffering as normal. As those who have gone before us. Now we can be patient and love and care for others.

QUESTION: What are some ways that we can help others feel ok with sharing when they are suffering? To make our church a safe place for the struggling?

Connect on GRC Chat Group!

- Signup for the GRC chat group in the app (top right corner)
- Leader can then search for and add you to the group chat

PRAISE, PRAYER, AND CONFESSION:

- What can you offer to the Father in praise?
- What is a sin you need to confess?
- What is a burden we can carry?
- What can we take to our Father in prayer?