

James 5:7-12

Three topics in this passage: **patience, disciplined speech, and judgment**. Two of the topics - patience and disciplined speech - follow each other in A B A B alternation. The third topic, the fact of judgment, is threaded throughout the whole passage.

James has already spoken on all three topics.

On patience: James 1:2-4, James 1:12

On disciplined speech: James 1:19, James 1:26, James 3:1-12, James 4:11-12

On judgment: James 4:11-12, James 2:12-13, James 5:1

This passage contains new ideas. James gives examples of patience, he mentions some specific areas where we ought to particularly watch our speech, and he clearly states the imminence of judgment: it can come at any time.

Patience:

James's response to rich oppressors is to urge patience. The word James uses here refers to a patience expressed by self-restraint and no retaliation.

Three examples of patience:

- The farmer, who has to wait for his precious fruit:
 - Our steadfastness under difficulties will bear fruit.
 - We are not simply to wait, but to work as we wait, just like the farmer.
- The prophets of old, who endured abuse despite doing God's will.
 - We ought to expect and prepare for difficulties if we are doing God's will.
 - God knows our heart and our deeds and is sure to bless us for following him.
- Job, who never let go of his faith in God.
 - Even if we don't see God's mercy and compassion in our lives, we can trust it is there.
 - Even if we see no evidence of blessing at the time, we can trust that God will abundantly bless and reward us for faithfulness - in his timing. Today's problem: We are no longer used to waiting.

Disciplined speech:

Grumbling points to an attitude problem because it expresses our repressed bitterness and resentment against others. Though we say nothing, we break the commandment not to judge our fellow believer and so bring judgment on ourselves.

Above all other sins of speech we must avoid taking oaths. (See Matt. 5:34-37.) We still take oaths today.

Problems with oath-taking:

- Oaths imply a lack of character and trustworthiness
- Oaths can be a form of blasphemy
- Oaths imply that God's presence isn't reason enough for us to speak the truth

Judgment:

James's reason for his commands above is the coming judgment. It's usually easy to believe in a vague judgment sometime in the distant future that doesn't concern me right now. It's harder to practically believe in its imminence.

The early church clearly believed in a much sooner second coming than we do. It implies

- heaven taking over earth
- earth submitting to and adoring its rightful king
- God appearing to his people
- God revealing his full glory
- judgment
- we will see God as he is!

The second coming is central to our faith: it completes and perfects God's work of redemption. It is the final expression of God's sovereignty and the bright vision that gives us hope.

How to prepare:

- be watchful
- do not despair because of the long wait
- prepare while you have time
- practice fellowship, love, and mutual hospitality
- abide in Christ