

YOU TOO BE PATIENT!

In the New Testament, we are repeatedly reminded that a child of God is not without trial and temptation in this world. Each trial and temptation that we overcome or conquer by the Lord's life in us leads to more spiritual maturity and preparation for His coming kingdom. We are to grow up and be strong in the Lord.

The book of James gives us several instructions on this matter of trial and temptation. James wrote to the twelve tribes that were scattered, which would include what are called the lost tribes of the house of Israel that had lost their national identity. However, we should note that the ones James wrote to believed that Jesus is the Messiah. They accepted Christ as the King from the tribe of Judah.

In James, the Greek word used for *trial* or *temptation* is *peirasmos*, which has two meanings. It can refer to things that lead to wrongdoing, sinning, or to things that are definitely permitted or sent by God to prove or test our faith. In the Bible, there are temptations that lead to wrongdoing (Luke 4:12, 8:13; 1 Timothy 6:9-10; James 1:2), and there are trials or temptations that lead to proving or testing our faith (Luke 22:28-30; Acts 20:17-22; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 4:12-14). In either case, we must be clear that a believer can fail, that is, fail to overcome the temptation that leads to sin and death, and fail to endure the testing of our faith. However, the good news is that God knows of our tendency to fail or to miss the mark, and, in His great love and faithfulness to us, He has made a way for us to come through in victory (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now, let us turn to the book of James.

Knowing that the testing of your faith.

James starts by writing to his brethren.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (James 1:2-3 NKJ)

How many of us when we find ourselves in a trial consider it a joy? Many of us are tempted to become sullen, depressed, defeated by the trials that come into our lives. We might even question if God loves us. Is He really watching over us? Does He really love us? Of course, the answer is a loud yes! But James gives us the right view of trials when he says "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." In other words, we must know that the trial has a purpose, and that it is to test our faith. Do we believe God or not? Do we trust in the One who is faithful or not? Do we believe He is able to keep us and preserve us to the end? God has a purpose in mind for us when we encounter these trials. He wants to produce fruit in our lives that will prepare us for His kingdom.

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There is a fruit that is to come forth from these various trials that are for the testing of our faith. The fruit is patience, which really means “patient endurance.” This is one of the nine fruits of the spirit that are to be produced in all who walk by the spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25 NASB)

Thus, a sign that one is walking by the spirit is that the person has patience, even in the time of trial and tribulation.

The Greek word for *patience* is *hupomone*, which means “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy, patient continuance (waiting).” The word implies a right attitude during the trial which is joy, cheerfulness or hopefulness, and a constancy which causes us to continue on and not give up. We are to wait. Also, the word *joy* implies a calmness, which means that we wait calmly.

In other words, the testing of our faith is designed for a purpose, and that purpose is to produce patient endurance through whatever days the Lord gives us in this life. Jesus told us that in the world we will have tribulation (John 16:33). Paul, the beloved apostle, said that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Both Jesus and Paul used the same Greek word *thlipsis*, which means “pressure, affliction, anguish, persecution, tribulation, trouble.”

It is through pressure that we enter the kingdom of Christ. Why? Because pressure forms kingdom character!

Trials that test our faith may seem like pressure, affliction, anguish of our soul, a real trouble to our soul. But we are exhorted to know ahead of time that these things will come. So we should not be caught unaware when they come upon us for testing. Instead, we should rejoice and count it as all joy or calm gratefulness because it is God’s way to produce fruit in our lives, and that fruit is to patiently endure, and patiently enduring will lead us into glory in the coming kingdom.

We need to ask ourselves: Why must we patiently endure? Very simply, we are awaiting the return of our Lord and King. He has gone away to receive a kingdom, and it has been a long time (Luke 19:12). Some might be tempted to believe that He is not coming again so they give up hope. Will He come back? Some will even mock: **“Where is the promise of His coming?”** (2 Peter 3:4).

Oh, He will come. We need to patiently endure through the days. Don’t give up hope. He is our hope, and He will not fail!

Meditate upon the encouragement found in the Psalms.

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Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD! (Psalm 27:14 NKJ)

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. (Psalm 62:5-7 NKJ)

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. (Psalm 130:5 NKJ)

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him... (Psalm 37:7 NKJ)

Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land... (Psalm 37:34 NKJ)

What encouragement! Rest in the Lord. Wait patiently. He shall exalt you to inherit the land. I realize that many have been taught that the land is a literal, physical piece of property either in the Middle East or in heaven, but this is not our hope. Our hope is immortality, and this comes with the redemption of our mortal body (Romans 8:23) when what is mortal is swallowed up in life (2 Corinthians 5:4) at the resurrection and transfiguration into the image of the Son of God. The Lord's people are called to be joint heirs with Christ, to inherit the kingdom of the heavens and rule over the earth and among the celestials with the King of kings and the Lord of lords in the eon (age) to come.

Although the focus of this article is on what James has to say on the matter of enduring trial, I would be remiss if I did not quote Peter as well.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:6-9 NASB)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is

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not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:12-17 NASB)

Peter knew of strange trials in his own life, and we must be prepared for them as well, especially as we look for the coming of the Lord. Notice how Peter connected testing and various trials to future glory, which is related to the revelation of Jesus Christ. As we will see, James connected trial to the coming of the Lord and loving the Lord as well.

Before moving on to more of James, I must offer a little editorial comment on this matter of trial and suffering. As I listen to some of the large and well-known broadcast ministries, I seldom hear any teaching on this matter. Instead, it seems that much of the emphasis is quite the contrary, as if Christians should not suffer, and, if they do, it is because of a lack of faith or because they have failed to “place a demand on their faith (or money)”; a concept that I fail to see in Scripture and that seems all about extorting money to make a man and his ministry rich and little to do with encouraging one to press on toward the goal. When I hear a preacher brag about how he loves \$100 bills (and, by the way, God does too) and how he has clothes in his closet that still have the price tags on them, as he tells people to place a demand on the money he is asking them to give to him, frankly, I start screaming at the television. Such shenanigans would be laughable if it weren't for the fact that many Christians fall for such things.

But there is something more serious and subtle that I sense has happened to Christians, especially those living in the United States. Instant gratification is very much a part of our culture today, and this has permeated the so-called church culture as well. Rather than being taught to patiently endure, Christians are taught that they can have it all now as long as they have the right type of faith and they exercise their faith in the right way, which, by the way, is often associated with giving money.

I wrote about having it all now in article #16, December 2008, *Simplicity and Purity to Christ*.

But the point is that Christians are being told that they shouldn't suffer trials, and, if they do, it is because of their faith or lack of faith. However, the Bible tells us very clearly just the opposite. Faith must be tested in light of the goal that is set before us. Testing of our faith is not so that we get what we demand or want but that we learn to patiently endure through the trial, nor does it mean that our faith demand that we get out of the trial. Faith allows us to remain in it until such time as it passes, and we have learned the lesson that the Lord is teaching, and we bear more fruit of the spirit.

Notice that in the above verses, Peter stated **to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**. Peter was not alone in this regard,

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for, in expressing his heart to the Philippians, Paul wrote that his desire was **to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead** (Philippians 3:10-11 NASB). Or, consider what Paul wrote to the believers in Rome.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:16-18 NASB)

This is from the same brother in Christ who declared: **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:14 NASB).

Trial can be a suffering and suffering leads to glory. So, let us not shrink away from trials but embrace them when they come.

Now, let us return to James, for there is more to this matter of patient endurance. There is a perfect work that is to be done.

Let patience have its perfect work.

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:4 NKJ)

By patiently enduring, waiting upon the Lord, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us, we will come to a place of completeness or perfection. The word *perfect* in the Greek is *teleios*, which means “complete or of full age” in relation to various applications such as labor, growth, or mental and moral character. In other words, we are to grow to a mature man.

In Ephesians 4:13, Paul reveals to us that the body of Christ is to grow to a mature man, the fulness of Christ. This perfect work of the Holy Spirit is bringing us to a point where we are lacking nothing.

What does this mean? It means that we are to be full of Christ. We are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15), and this new creation is to grow up to a mature man in the likeness of the Son of God. We are children today, but we are to grow up to be sons who are worthy to inherit the kingdom and who will be placed in the kingdom to reign with the King of kings.

When the Lord Jesus comes for His people, they will lack nothing in *that* day. But in *this* day, we are to patiently endure the trials, allowing a perfect work to be done that completely conforms us to the image of Christ. Only in Him do we lack

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nothing because in Him is all the fulness of God (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). There is nothing lacking in our beloved Lord Jesus. He is the Son who has been perfected forever (Hebrews 7:28). He is the perfect Man.

Let him ask God.

When we find ourselves in various trials, often we are perplexed. What are we to do? Where are we to go? These and many other questions are very legitimate. Many, if not all the figures in the Bible, found themselves in perplexing situations that left them wondering, frustrated, bewildered, and yes, probably depressed. At times like this, we might be tempted to think that we should not inquire of God, or we might not even have the strength to inquire. After all, if these trials are for testing, it might appear to be a lack of faith if we ask God what to do, or, even worse, we might think that we deserve what is happening to us; therefore, we should keep quiet. Just the opposite is true. God wants us to lean upon Him during these times and to learn His ways. He wants us to ask not to be taken out of the trial, for this would be lack of faith, but to ask for wisdom how to endure.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8 NKJ)

God is a giving God. He gives liberally and without regret to His children. In fact, God loves to give wisdom to His children. Is this not what a father does for his children? We do not have all the answers. At times, we seem to have no answers during trials. But God says to come to Him and He will liberally give us wisdom. On our part, we are not to doubt Him. If we ask, then believe. It is that simple. If we doubt, then we are double-minded, unstable. It is like being on the sea, tossed to and fro by the wind. We have no direction and yet we seem to be going in all sorts of directions. God has a way for us. We must learn to lean upon His way and not our own.

Unfortunately, some of the Lord's people strive for their own answers to the trials. This is a great temptation for believers, especially ones who are rich with the things of this world. For this reason, James proceeds to speak of those who are poor and those who are rich.

When he has been approved.

Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. (James 1:9-11 NKJ)

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Rather than trusting the Lord for wisdom, a rich believer is in great danger of trusting his riches. It seems so secure and so lasting, and yet it is so perishable. It is a great temptation to believe that the answer to all problems lies in money, wealth. “Oh, if I only had more money, all my problems would be solved.” This is a lie. Wisdom from God is the answer.

Riches cause men to pursue things of this earth instead of that which is celestial. It can lead even the Lord’s people into temptation and harmful lusts that will lead to the death of their soul in relation to the day of Christ (1 Timothy 6:8-10).

Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. Why? Because as our Lord Jesus said, **“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God”** (Luke 6:20 NKJ). The poor are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom to come. They do not have earthly riches to lean on so they must lean upon the ever loving arm of the Lord. The lowly brother can glory in his exaltation, for he is honored to be in a place of trusting the Lord, being rich in faith.

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5 NKJ)

Like Paul, James saw the goal and the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). Patient endurance during trials and temptations leads us into the coming kingdom of our Lord.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12 NKJ)

This is our goal—to be approved by the Lord in the day of His return. If we love Him, we will endure trials and temptations to the end. Do you love Him? Then endure. He is faithful and He will reward you for faithfulness resulting from your time of trial. You will receive the crown of life. What does a crown mean? It means reigning with Christ in His coming kingdom. When He comes to ascend the throne of the kingdom over the nations of earth, He will ascend with those who are approved as heirs of the kingdom because they love Him. He loves you!

Loving God under trials.

No matter what the trial is, we are to love the Lord. We might be tempted to think that God does not love us when we are experiencing difficult times. This is a lie, and we must refuse to accept any voice that says God does not love us. He loves us, and there is absolutely no reason for a child of God to question this love (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4; 1 John 3:16; Revelation 1:5b; 3:19). In knowing that God loves us with a never-ending love (Romans 8:35-39), we are to love God with our whole heart. The one who perseveres under trial out of love for the Lord is a blessed person, a happy person in the face of difficulties.

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Our Lord has been gone from this earth for two millennia. He is coming back soon and He is looking for those who love Him. When we love someone, it causes us to endure anything for that person. We are called to love our Lord through all the trials of this life. If we love to the end, there is a reward awaiting us. Again, it is the crown of life. In the day of the judgment seat of Christ, when He reviews the lives of His people, He will approve those who have endured the trials and temptations. He is looking for love. Love for the Lord keeps us patiently enduring until His return. Do not give up but press on until that day.

The Lord Jesus longs to approve of His people when He returns (Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12). Love for the Lord will lead us to His approval in that day.

God cannot be tempted by evil.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (James 1:13 NASB)

As stated previously, the Greek word *peirasmos* can have two meanings, one of which refers to things that are designed to lead to wrong doing, sinning. These things are called *temptations* (Luke 4:13; 8:13; 1 Timothy 6:9-10; James 1:2). We must be clear that a believer can fail to overcome temptations that lead to sin or missing the mark. However, the good news is that in His great love for us and in His faithfulness to us, He has made a way for us to come through in victory.

James wanted to be very clear that God does not tempt anyone with evil. He may be the creator of evil (Isaiah 45:7), but He does not tempt anyone with it. He will allow trials to come into our lives to test our faith, but He will never tempt us with evil. The devil tempts but the Lord never does. The fact of the matter is that the devil, the crooked serpent, was created to be our tempter and to be God’s tool in creating trials for us.

For more on the crooked serpent, please see *The Upward Call*, issue #03-09121, May 6, 2009, *The Crooked, Ancient Serpent*.

When the tempter, the devil, comes, he often presents us with an argument that seems good to our flesh. **“You surely shall not die”** (Genesis 3:4 NASB). These are the words that tempted Eve. You will hear this voice saying: “What you are about to do is O.K. Don’t worry about it. It isn’t a big thing; just do it. Go ahead and live.” As we hear this voice, we also hear a very quiet voice speaking to our hearts, “This thing is wrong. It will lead to death.” God does not tempt, but He does give us a way to escape if we have an ear to hear.

What is the way? It is the word of God. When Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil He answered every temptation by the word of God (Luke 4:1-13).

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And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” (Luke 4:4 NASB)

It is written! This is our way out of every temptation that leads to evil. God promised that He would make a way of escape for us (1 Corinthians 10:13). This escape is through the written word. For every situation, trial or temptation, there is a word in the word of God to answer the challenge. The word of God implanted or rooted in us is able save our soul (James 1:21).

When he is drawn away.

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:14-15 NASB)

Every evil temptation is aimed at drawing us away from the Lord, and it is done by enticing our own desires. In other words, the temptation appeals to our body and soul. It brings us satisfaction not only in our soul but also in our body.

If we allow our soul to reign over our lives instead of our spirit, which is to be under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, then we will be drawn away by our own selfish desires, our self-interest. Desire is like the seed that gives birth. It impregnates and gives birth to sin. Like a child that grows up, when sin is full-grown, it brings forth death. Thus, Satan’s words “You surely shall not die” prove to be a lie. He is the deceiver.

Sin is deceitful, and it will harden our hearts (Hebrews 3:13). If we give sin a little ground in our lives, it will begin to take more and more ground until it has consumed us and brought us into death. Death will yield no fruit for the Lord and yield no reward in the day of His judgment.

Every good gift is from above.

James says, “**Do not be deceived**” (James 1:16). If your soul is reigning over your life, the things that appear good to you will lead you astray. We will know the value of the things in our lives by their source.

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17 NASB)

Do not be deceived because if we know our God, we will know that every good and perfect gift comes from above. It comes down from the Father of light, who loves us. There is no variation in Him. He does not change. His ways are pure and full of light. There is no darkness in Him. If we are being tossed to and fro, doubting, wondering, living in bewilderment, it is not of God. This is not the heart of a loving

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God. He is the God who gives His children wisdom so that they can live a stable life in the midst of trial and temptation.

Brought forth by the word of truth.

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. (James 1:18 NASB)

Of God's own will He has brought us forth by the word of truth. Jesus is the Word, and He is the Truth. By God's own doing, we have been brought forth in His Son. We are a new creation in Christ, and this new creation is a kind of first fruits of God's creatures. James wrote these words with a view of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. When we read of first fruits, our attention is being drawn to the Lord's return and the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15). Paul had the same view of first fruits when he wrote of the resurrection.

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:23 NASB)

It is God's own will to bring forth by His own word something that He calls first fruits of His creatures. What are the first fruits? It is the one new man in Christ (Ephesians 2:15). Christ is the Head of a new race of people who are being conformed to His image. He is the first-born from the dead (Colossians 1:18).

In other words, He has taken that which was dead and raised it up to a new life, a new man. This new man is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old man, all who are in Adam, will die. But thank God, in Christ there is a new man and all who are in this man shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

This is the hope of those who believe on the Lord and love Him, even long for His appearing. Our hope is in Christ who was raised from the dead as the First Fruit. He is the first man to overcome death and to ascend to the throne of God to sit upon His Father's throne until His throne is manifested over the nations of the earth. When He sits upon His own throne in the days of His Messianic kingdom, then He will grant to the first fruits to sit upon His throne as He sat upon His Father's throne (Revelation 3:21). Who are the first fruits? They are the ones who overcome or conquer the trials and temptations of this life.

Now, what is the word of the truth? It is the kingdom that is to come. It is the word of the kingdom. The age in which we live is about to come to a close. James wrote with a view to this coming kingdom (James 1:12; 2:5; 5:7, 8) and was revealing the way into this kingdom as first fruits. Patient endurance and the implanted word are the way into the kingdom.

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A first fruit is one who is prepared before all the other fruit. In the day of Christ, there will be those saints who have endured through the many trials and temptations. They will be the ones who have come to know the love of God through these things and have longed for the appearing of the Lord. In that day, they will be approved to receive the crown of life.

So then, my beloved brethren.

How is the new man to live when faced with various trials and temptations?

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20 NKJ)

It is an objective truth that by God's own doing we have been placed in Christ the Righteous One, who is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 John 2:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21). But in our daily walk, we are to live righteously. We are to be righteous because our God is righteous. John tells us that every one who practices righteousness is born of God (1 John 2:29). First fruits practice righteousness.

James gives us the way through trials that produce the righteousness of God.

First, we are to be swift to hear. When confronted with a trial, our natural tendency is to react without actually listening. In fact, most arguments come about by people who are not listening. They are reacting. They jump to some conclusion and respond in the flesh rather than being led by the spirit of God.

Second, we are to be slow to speak (see Matthew 12:36-37). A man under the leadership of the Holy Spirit is in no rush to speak quickly. He listens and discerns in the spirit, not in the soul.

Finally, we are to be slow to anger. The progression of listening swiftly and of being slow to speak helps us to be slow to anger or wrath. It gives us time to discern what the spirit of God is saying and how to respond in righteousness.

So then, my brethren, as a new creation in Christ, the first fruits of God's creatures, we are to live righteously. The wrath of man, which comes from the old man in us, does not produce the righteousness of God. Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Do this with a view to the coming kingdom. Do this with a view to being first fruits of this kingdom. Do this out of a love for the Lord!

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. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. As an example,

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brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (James 5:7-11 NASB)

So, let us endure to the end, for **if we endure, we will also reign with Him** (2 Timothy 2:12 NASB). Endure and be blessed!

You too be patient!

The kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is coming!

Scripture Abbreviations:

NASB New American Standard Bible
NKJ New King James Version

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