

05.15.11 / James 5:7-12

Application / Prayer**IMPATIENCE REVEALS SELF-RELIANCE**

Anything that we are to BE is ultimately something that God IS. And so ultimately, we are to be PATIENT because the LORD IS PATIENT. Patience that is of the Lord can only be fruit of the transformation that He is performing in us. We cannot muster it or concoct it of our own strength. Any attempt to do so will fail, and when we fail, we will look down on ourselves for not having lived up to God. Consider the alternative: seeing patience developed by the Lord as part of the transformation process He is doing in us. How does this patience get developed? The Lord very graciously allows us many opportunities to see our IMPatience, allowing us to recognize areas of our lives where we are being self-reliant rather than God-reliant. In this passage the Lord shows us how we can recognize our impatience. If we find ourselves grumbling, complaining, or short-tempered against one another, we can be assured that there is much room for patience to be developed, much room for us to become more like God. Consider it a joy (James 1) when you run up against circumstances that reveal your impatience, for in this you are seeing opportunities for repentance and transformation.

- 1) Ask your group where they find themselves to be impatient?
- 2) How does this impatience reveal self-reliance?
- 3) Explore how things would be different if they relied on God and His timing instead – how would they pray differently, how would they love people differently, how would their lives look more like God?
- 4) STOP AND PRAY together as a group FOR ONE ANOTHER, for wisdom (James 1), and for the development of patience in your group. Ask for healing where grumbling has caused dissension and division among the body. Show mercy towards one another.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

This passage has a particular emphasis regarding patience, as it calls us to remain patient despite tangible suffering. In order to do this, we must have a hope in something beyond the suffering we are currently experiencing. We must have a hope in something more ultimate than the temporary suffering. As Christians, this hope is in Christ. While this may sound predictable and blasé, it is anything but that, for we must understand what Christ has done to bring us this hope. He has completely defeated the root cause of our suffering. Sin is the cause of our suffering, and He has defeated sin. Thus, our hope is not in the changing of our circumstances, but rather in our God who has made this possible. You see, hope in circumstantial change isn't really hope at all, and it doesn't lead to patience, but rather a sort of holding of the breath as we hope for something to change. Hope in God, however, allows us to breathe deeply, regardless of circumstance, to trust in the Lord and to taste His joy in the midst of trials, to pray for boldness that will send us into conflict with the world, to take on the courage to walk into circumstances that will REQUIRE patience, and to willingly suffer. THIS sort of patience can NOT be rooted in hope for circumstantial change, but MUST be rooted in that which never changes: our God. When we have THIS patience, THIS hope, we begin to see the purposes of God and to taste His compassion and mercy (verse 11). When we have THIS patience, THIS hope, we can be patient until the coming of the Lord because the coming of the Lord is as certain as the setting of the sun this evening and the rising of the sun tomorrow morning (verse 7). When our trust is in He who does not change, the swirling, constant change of our own circumstances ultimately holds no sway over our hearts, and we become steadfast, just like our CONSTANT God.

- 1) Ask your group where they are currently suffering (this could be extremely difficult)?
- 2) Explore the struggle to see God's compassion and mercy in the suffering.
- 3) How are people "holding their breath" and just waiting for circumstances to change?

- 4) STOP AND PRAY INSTEAD for our hope to be in Christ, who has destroyed sin, rather than simply in a change of circumstance – PRAY for the development of steadfastness through the trial (James 1).

Sources

- Prayer
- The Bible Exposition Commentary
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary
- The Bible Reader's Companion