

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the **Epistle of James**

18- We Count Those Blessed Who Endured

Church; July 25, 2021

James 5:1-12

5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

7 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.

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

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

10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

11 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.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your ayes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

To the Glory of God

Now last week, we examined verses 1-6 and tried to find out several Issues such as:

- Why James was so against the “Rich” of his day
- What it means to be “Rich”
- What we can do to guard our hearts about the Dangers of Wealth; Riches; and Prosperity

... because James said that the “Rich” should weep and howl.

And we found out that it wasn’t simply those who were wealthy that James was so opposed- but to the *wicked* wealthy- because these people were using their wealth and power and political connections to persecute the believers of the Church at Jerusalem.

But since verse 7 begins with the word, “**Therefore**”- it shows us that verses 7-12 are *connected* to verses 1-6. So, when we read:

James 5:7a

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...

... this is NOT a “stand-alone” verse and should NOT be used as one. James is teaching here that the Persecution that the saints were going through by the hand of wealthy and powerful people (that James talked about in verses 1-6) may very well *continue* until Jesus comes back. And so, James is telling his fellow- laborers in the Gospel to “be patient” UNTIL Jesus comes back.

Now usually when we talk about “being patient”- we are talking about something that will probably be resolved by three o’clock tomorrow. But when the biblical writers speak of being “patient” or “enduring”- they are talking about Issues that will likely exist- FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS LIFE! For example, in **2Corinthians 4:17**, when Paul said,

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

... he wasn’t *minimizing* his situation. Because just seven Chapters later (**2Corinthians 11:23-28**)- he actually listed for us what he was going through:

- Far more imprisonments
- Beaten times without number
- Often in danger of death
- 39 lashes- on five different occasions
- Beaten with rods- on three different occasions

- Stoned
- Shipwrecked- on three different occasions
- A night and day in the sea
- Frequent journeys
- Dangers from rivers
- Danger from robbers
- Danger from the Jews
- Danger from the Gentiles
- Dangers in the cities
- Danger in the country
- Danger in the wilderness (probably from animals)
- Dangers on the sea
- Danger among false brethren
- Labor and hardship
- Many sleepless nights
- Hunger and thirst
- Often without food
- In cold and exposure

... and then to top it off he said,

2Corinthians 11:28

Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

So, back in **2Corinthians 4:17** when Paul referred to his “**momentary light affliction**” he wasn’t being brave. He was simply saying that the Persecution that he (and the other believers with him) was experiencing was **ONLY FOR THIS LIFE**. In other words, what made the Affliction both “**momentary**” and “**light**” was **NOT** because he didn’t hurt. Because those beatings hurt Paul very badly. Every time that whip or those rods landed on his back- Paul hurt. And the process of what went on when this godly man was beaten with rods and the whip- over and over- is enough to make the bravest man among us- squirm.

We need to remember that Paul was beaten with both the whip and with rods because he was a prisoner. And back then- Prison was usually a hole or a cave or the dungeon. It would be hard to find a more unsanitary place for a man, who had just been beaten to be- besides a prison in the 1st Century. And there was no medical treatment for prisoners back then either; no antibiotics; no sterile gauze; and no nurse to wash the wounds.

So, as the skin of his back was ripped open from the beating- this Apostle would be carried back to the hole or the dungeon- where he would be put into a sitting position with his feet chained to the floor. And he would have a dirty pot, with rancid food in it, to eat. And at night the rats came out- to eat at his toes and his face and his fresh wounds. And as the serum ran from his body- the wounds would get infected- and he would have a ranging fever that may have made him delirious. And after several days of that high fever- he would have sweat the fever off; and then the healing process would begin; and the scars would literally cover his back. So, you're looking at several weeks.

And then they came and got him; and they beat him again. And then they beat him again. And again. And again. Three beatings with rods; and five beatings with 39 lashes from the whip that had bits of lead and rough metal tied into the leather straps.

Now the fact that Paul says that these people beat him with 39 lashes- tells us that this particular beating was carried out by the Romans and not the Jews. And the reason we know that- is because the Romans had perfected the torture and the beatings they administered to their prisoners. And that is why they crucified many. The Romans were so good at beating people- that they usually died after 40 lashes. So, the Roman Emperor issued a Decree that any prisoner, who lived after receiving 40 lashes, had to be set free. Even the cruel and barbarian Roman Emperor said that 40 lashes was enough.

So, to keep from having to set free the prisoners they really despised- the Roman soldiers would beat them 39 times. And this allowed them to get around the Emperors Decree- which meant they could keep on beating that person- as many times as they wanted. And Paul says they wanted to beat him like that- five different times.

Now it is common for people to think that the Romans beat Jesus only 39 times for this same reason. That isn't true. They beat Jesus unmercifully, until they got tired of beating Him. And it is also true that they beat Jesus in the front and on His Face as well as on His Back. It is truly a Miracle that Jesus lived through His beating- *before* He ever went to the Cross. Evidently God *supernaturally* preserved Jesus' Life- so He would die by Crucifixion- in accord with the Scriptures (**Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 12:10¹**)- rather than by the beating.

So, Paul was praising God that the evil people, who were dishing out the Persecution, could only do it as long as Paul (and the others) were alive. Once they crossed over into Eternity- they would NEVER hurt again! And since living 80, 90, or even 120 years here on earth is NOTHING compared to

¹ The earliest record of Crucifixion dates to 519BC, when King Darius I of Persia had 3,000 of his political enemies crucified. Isaiah lived and ministered between 740-686 BC. So, it is possible that Isaiah's Prophecy was given BEFORE Crucifixion was even invented. Zechariah prophesied around 520BC.

Eternity- the biblical writers were faithful to remind the believers that all of their Troubles and Trials and Persecutions and Afflictions and Hardships will be over when their Life here on earth is over. And for believers, in Eternity, there will be NO Evil nor any evil People, who will persecute them. And *that* is the context of what James meant when he said,

James 5:7a

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...

Now we don't like to hear things like that here in America. Because of our unprecedented Prosperity; and the fact that, for the majority of the time this Nation has existed, Christianity in general has actually been *preferred, respected,* and even *subsidized*². And so, we really think the ease at which we worship Jesus is normal. It isn't. The overwhelming majority of all believers, who are alive right now; and who have ever lived- have NEVER for one minute, had the ease and preferred treatment that believers enjoy here in the United States.

Most believers, who are just as saved as we are; and who are just as loved by Jesus as we are- are *routinely* persecuted. For example, the believers who live in nations that are ruled by Islamic Caliphates have to pay a "tax"- simply because they love Jesus. But in addition to paying that tax- the Christians of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and many other nations, are rounded up; they have their possessions confiscated; they are beaten; and thrown in jail at the whim of the Government. In many cases, the police come in the middle of the night; arrest the father; haul him off to prison; and the family never sees him again. No trial; no defense; and no appeal. And that kind of treatment of believers is what is normal. It is common and routine. It has been that way since the middle of the 7th Century (about 1400 years) and may well be that way until Jesus returns. It is the way we live here in the United States as Christians- that is NOT normal.

Now I'm not trying to make everybody feel guilty this morning. We just happened to be born in the United States during the last part of the 20th Century or the first part of the 21st. It wasn't our fault- we had no choice or input into that Reality. That is the Providence and the Will of God for us. So, what do we do about all this ease and security that we enjoy here? We should thank God for our Freedom and our Prosperity; and we should use it for God's Glory- and NOT allow either our Safety nor our Prosperity to lull us into spiritual slumber. Perhaps the greatest Judgment that any people could ever have put on them is the Judgment of Apathy and Lethargy and Self-centeredness. And that is the greatest Danger we face here in America.

² Churches in the United States enjoy a tax- exempt status.

Christians may never be literally and physically persecuted here in America. I certainly hope not. So, that isn't where our concern should lie. Our concern should be to guard against becoming Apathetic to the plight of our brothers and sisters, who ARE being persecuted. And our Danger is that we allow the wondrous Gifts of Safety and Security that God has given us- to make us lethargic about the things of the Spirit of God- where the various "Means of Grace" like Prayer and Fasting and Fellowship and Service to others is *minimized* or even *ignored*- because we *wrongly* conclude that, since we are safe and secure- we really have no need for those things.

It takes a lot of time to care for all the many Blessings that God has given to believers here in America. So, we must guard against being *so blessed* by God- and taking care of all those Blessings- that we forget to worship and love and obey the One Who gave the Blessings. And we forget those who don't have and probably will *never* have those Blessings.

Far too many American Christians think that the Answer to every problem- even the Answer to the persecuted Church around the world- is for us to throw more money at them. The Reality is that, probably the BEST thing we can do for those believers in other nations, who are being so horribly persecuted- is to pray for them. It is that we cry out to God- NOT for Him to cause them to be Safe and Secure- but that He will grant that they will be found Faithful and that they will heed James' words like,

James 5:7a

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...

Back in the early 1990's (before the Internet) I was involved in a Ministry where I mailed about 1,000 newsletters to every single State except Alaska and Hawaii. The newsletters were simply Sermons. And each one had to be folded and separated by zip code. It was a fairly long process that took all night- once a month.

And I mailed about 200 of these Sermon/newsletters to Africa. It took two months to get there; and if they replied- it took about two months to get a reply. And there was a brother in Nairobi, Kenya- named Joseph- who wrote me a letter. And he was responding to a Sermon I had sent him two months prior. And, in part, he wrote,

“The Muslims have over-run our village. They have killed our wives and children and the brothers God called to be with me have fled into the mountains to escape. And I have two requests.”

So, what did this man want from me? What would a man, who has just witnessed his Wife and Children murdered by people who were deceived by the false religion of Islam, and who has been abandoned by those who valued their lives more than they valued the Gospel- want *me* to pray about? That I could send him money so he could come over here and be safe like me? That I could petition the Government of Kenya to send troops in to keep him safe?

As I lived in amazing Safety and Security and in unprecedented Prosperity; and had never spent five seconds in any Situation like this- what in the world did this man want *me* to pray about? He told me,

“1) Please pray that those God sent to be with me will repent and come back and help me. And 2) pray that with all boldness- I can preach the Word of God to the point of death.”

My friends, as I read those two prayer requests- I wept like a baby. I had never felt so shallow; so lukewarm; so self-centered; and so dirty. This man didn't want me to pray for his Safety. He wanted me- ME- to pray for his faithfulness! Now I need to tell you that I never heard from Joseph again. I continued to mail those Sermons to him every month until August of 1997- but I never heard from him again. Did the Muslims kill him? Did he proclaim God's Word- faithfully? Did those other men come back? I don't know. But I prayed every day after that. Because that letter changed my life. And I hope to meet that man in Heaven.

But *this* is what James meant when he said,

James 5:11a

We count those blessed who endured...

... not for a week; not for a month; not for a year; not for a while- but endure UNTIL... This Endurance is always “open ended” in the Bible. It is always “UNTIL”. We are to endure- UNTIL- the Lord comes; or UNTIL we die and go to meet Him.

And James says here that those who endure; those who remain faithful; those who persevere; those who are patient- are “blessed”. Now the word “endure” comes from a Greek word (*hupomeneoe*; Strong's # 5278) that means: *to remain; to remain under; to sustain; bear up under; to suffer faithfully through miseries, adversities, persecutions, and provocations- with faith.*

And James said those who endure are “**blessed**”. And the word, “**blessed**” as used here comes from a Greek word (*makariozoe*; Strong's # 3106) which means: *fully satisfied; and happy.*

So, our Endurance; our Perseverance; our Patience- our ability to go through Trials and Persecutions and Troubles and Afflictions- with Faith- not only glorifies God- but it is the pathway to the fullness of our Joy as well!

So, we are to endure Persecution; and Trouble; and Trials; and Afflictions. We are to *keep on* believing; and *keep on* trusting; and *keep on* repenting; and *keep on* hoping; and *keep on* obeying- even when things are hard and difficult and even when doing those things will result in our imprisonment and torture and even when doing those things will result in our deaths.

People ask me all the time about the blind; and those who can't talk or hear; and those with no legs or arms. What about them? Does God expect them to be faithful too? Yes! Every single person, who has been chosen; who has been called; those who have been drawn to Jesus by God the Holy Spirit; everyone, who has been born again; and those who have been forgiven and made Righteous- God expects ALL of them to also be faithful; and to endure; and to persevere; and to be patient. How long should they endure? UNTIL.

You see, there will be some blind people in Hell. Why? Because blind people love Darkness too. Blind people sin against God too. People born blind were shaped in their mother's womb with the very SAME fallen and sinful and rebellious Nature of Adam as those who can see perfectly.

And those who can't walk; or who can't talk; or those with no ability to gain wealth; and those who live every day under terrible Governments- they sin too. And they lust too. And they covet too. And they blaspheme God too. And those people sin for the SAME reason that everybody else sins- because they WANT to. And they don't turn to Jesus; and they don't repent; and they don't trust in Jesus and in what Jesus alone has done- for the SAME reason that others do- because they DON'T want to.

So, God has called the blind to be faithful and to endure with no ability to see- just like He expects those who can see perfectly to endure and remain faithful. And God has called those with other natural problems to repent and to trust in Jesus- just like everybody else. Having a natural handicap does NOT exempt a person from Hell anymore than being strong in their body exempts others.

And that is fairly straight forward. But remember that I told you that our Prosperity and our Wealth and our Riches and our Safety and Security here in the United States is NOT normal. These things are Gifts from God that we don't deserve and have not earned. But if these Gifts cause us to lose our Faith; if these wondrous Blessings enable us to become worse off- spiritually; if these Kindnesses ruin us- then we still lose- even if we haven't gone through anything like others.

And that means that, in addition to enduring through all those terrible and hard things- we are also to endure through our Prosperity; and through our Wealth; and through our Riches; and our Safety; and our Security. So, yes- we

are to endure and remain faithful to Jesus when sickness comes our way. But we are also to endure and stay faithful when God has gifted us with Good Health. We are to endure when things are terrible. But we are also to endure when things are wonderful. So, James is talking here about Endurance and Perseverance and Patience.

Now please notice that James talked about being “blessed” here. He said,

James 5:11a

We count those blessed who endured...

... or, “we count those *happy* who endured.” Or, “we count them *satisfied* who endured.” Why? Because Endurance- Perseverance; Patience; or staying faithful to Jesus through WHATEVER God brings into our Life- is two things:

1. A *Gift* of Grace
2. A *Work* of Grace

Endurance is both

1. Something God gives us
2. Something we do

Staying faithful to Jesus- UNTIL is:

1. A Sovereign Act of God
2. An Act that we cooperate in

So, it is true to say, “*God will keep us faithful.*” But it is ALSO true to say, “*I want to be faithful; I am striving to be faithful; and I am working hard to be faithful.*” But it is ALSO true to hear God command us, “*Be faithful.*” ALL of that is found in the Bible; and ALL of that is true. For example, in **Matthew 24:9-13**, Jesus said,

9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

10 At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

11 Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

12 Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

13 But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

... so, here, believers are called to “endure” TO THE END. So, *however long* the Trouble Jesus speaks about here goes on- people, who have genuinely experienced the Miracle of the New Birth are to remain faithful; they are to persevere; they are to be patient; and they are to endure- UNTIL.

Or we could go to what the Apostle Paul told the Pastor of the Church of Ephesus in **1 Timothy 4:16**:

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

... or we could go to what Jesus said in **Luke 21:16-19**:

**16 But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,
17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.
18 Yet not a hair of your head will perish.
19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.**

.. or we could go to what the writer of **Hebrews** said in **Hebrews 6:11&12**:

**11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,
12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

... or we could go to what the Apostle Paul taught in **2 Corinthians 1:6&7**:

**6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;
7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.**

... or we could go to what John saw on the island of Patmos in **The Revelation 17:14**:

These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome

them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

... or Ephesians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

... or Colossians 1:2

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

... or The Revelation 2:10

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

... or The Revelation 2:13

I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

So, part and parcel to being saved- is that God gives to every single saved individual both the Desire and the Ability to *continue* with Jesus- UNTIL. And this Gift; this part of Salvation is called, the "*Perseverance of the Saints*".

Now like all biblical Truths- this Doctrine has been attacked and maligned and misunderstood and perverted and watered down and minimized and ignored. Yet it stands true and real and eternal. But "Perseverance" MUST be taught; and it MUST be understood. And it must be taught and understood RIGHTLY AND FULLY- or it will be misunderstood and warped.

And one of the ways this glorious Truth has been misunderstood and warped is when it is changed and minimized through the Man-made teaching of "*Once Saved Always Saved*" or "*Eternal Security*".

Now because "OSAS" and "ES" have become so popular today- I need to say something right out of the gate: Salvation is Eternal. 100% of those, who have truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth, will eventually be in Heaven. And

if a person has truly been saved- he CANNOT ever be lost. Okay, I said that. “*But, Brother Blair- isn’t that exactly what OSAS and ES teaches?*” Not exactly, No. And here is the difference:

The Truth about Perseverance flows from the Top down AND from the Bottom up.

Perseverance flows both from God to the individual AND from the individual to God. You see, God has promised to KEEP all those, who are truly saved. Jesus said in **John 6:37-40**

37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

... so, Jesus has promised that He would lose- NOTHING- or NOBODY. Okay, but what is connected to this KEEPING by Jesus? Look again at what Jesus said. He DIDN'T say, “I will lose nothing”- period. Instead, He said,

... of all that He has given Me I lose nothing ...

So, who will Jesus keep? NOT the ones, who simply pray a prayer. NOT the ones, who simply walk an aisle. NOT the ones, who simply join the Church. NOT the ones, who simply talk the talk. Who will Jesus keep?

... of all that He has given Me ...

Jesus has promised to keep ALL those, who were given to Him, by the Father. Look again at what Jesus said in verse 37:

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me ...

... and then look at what Jesus said in **John 6:44:**

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Jesus says here that NO human being CAN come to Jesus for Salvation UNLESS the Father draws him. Well, why not? Why can't ANYBODY just come to Jesus for Salvation because they choose to or because they want to? What is stopping them? Why does God the Father have to sovereignly "draw" lost people to Jesus? Why can't they come to Jesus on their own? Because ALL lost people are fallen. And because the FALL *ruined* both our Desire and our Ability to choose to come to Jesus. And the result is that UNLESS God the Father (through God the Spirit) sovereignly draws or drags lost people to Jesus- NOBODY would come.

But because it IS God's Will to save ALL of His elect- God "sees to it" (Providence) that He draws, ALL who are chosen for Salvation, from "before the Foundation of the world" (**Ephesians 1:4**). And so, those whom the Father draws are Gifts to Jesus. Jesus sees those whom the Father draws to Him as being "Gifts of God's Grace". And because Jesus loves His Father *infinitely*- He will NOT reject ANY that the Father draws. And, because Jesus loves His Father *infinitely*- He will NOT allow ANY who have been drawn to Him- to perish.

So, because Jesus loves His Father infinitely MORE than He loves us- two things are true:

1. It doesn't matter how sinful we have been- Jesus will receive us and save us
2. Jesus will NOT ALLOW us to perish

... but our Security- the *eternality* of our Salvation- is based MORE on Jesus' Love for His Father- rather than His Love for *us*; or *our* Love for Jesus- even though both of those Loves are true. So, in that sense- Jesus keeps us saved- *sovereignly*.

But part of being drawn to Jesus is that we are changed. Our Natures are changed. And as our Natures are changed- what we love, what we want and what we desire is also changed. And as those Loves, Wants, and Desires are changed- our Choices reflect those new Loves. So, as believers- we choose differently- because we love differently.

And as we choose differently- we choose to do and to think and to act in accord with what God has infallibly written in Scripture. And as we do that- we are *keeping ourselves* saved. And there are two passages that will help us to understand this dynamic. The first is found in **Jude 21**, where the half-brother of Jesus said:

keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

So, here, we are told to “keep yourselves in the Love of God”. Okay, so we are to “keep ourselves”, right? Sure. But now read verse 24:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

Here, Jude says that God will keep us. So, which one is it? Are we to “keep ourselves”; Or is God going to keep us? It is Both! God’s “keeping us”- is from the Top- down. And us, “keeping ourselves” is from the Bottom- up. Next look at **Philippians 2:12:**

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

... here, we are commanded to, “**work out your salvation with fear and trembling**”, which is the same thing as Jude said, “**Keep yourselves in the Love of God.**” But now look at the very next verse:

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Here, Paul said that it is God, “**who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**” That is from the Top- down. And us, “**Working out our won Salvation...**” is from the Bottom- up.

Now the Reality is that we are to “**work out our own Salvation**”... BECAUSE “**it is God, Who is at work in you...**” In other words, the ONLY reason we are able and willing to “work out our own Salvation” is because God is already “at work within us to give us BOTH the Will and the Power” to persevere or to stay faithful.

So, Perseverance differs from what is normally taught as OSAS or ES in that God does NOT keep us saved- period. God keeps us saved- by radically changing *us*- so that we have both the Will and the Ability to *keep ourselves!* (work for His good pleasure). Another way of looking at this is to say that we persevere; we remain faithful; we are patient in our Trials and Persecutions; we Endure- BECAUSE God keeps us. But God keeps us by changing our Nature so that we

genuinely love Jesus. And because we genuinely love Jesus- we earnestly and honestly desire to be near Him; and to obey Him; and to please Him; and to follow Him; and to glorify Him. And in doing that- we *keep ourselves* in the Love of God.

You see, Salvation is God doing a sovereign Work in wicked rebels- to the point that now they honestly and eternally love Jesus. Look what the Apostle John taught about this from **1John 4:19**:

We love, because He first loved us.

Now the context here is us loving God and loving each other. So, we love God (and each other) BECAUSE... Now the word, “BECAUSE” means: the “Catalyst”; the “Origination”; or the “Source” of something. So, the Source; the Origination; or the Catalyst of our Love for God (and each other) is... what?

... He first loved us.

So, we love God- yes! But WHY do we love God? BECAUSE... He first loved us. Now *when* does the Bible teach that God “set His Love” on those He intends to save? **“From before the Foundation of the world.” (Ephesians 1:4)**

So, God loved us- FIRST. And it is this Love that God set on us- FIRST- that *enables* and *empowers* us to love Him. So, do we love God? Yes. Do we love Him truly and eternally? Yes. Do we love Him because we genuinely WANT to love Him? Yes.

But WHY do we truly and eternally WANT to love Jesus?

... because He first loved us.

... so, our Love FOR God is a Gift FROM God.

And it is this genuine Gift of a Love for Jesus- that empowers and enables us to persevere or endure to the End. Yet we didn’t create this Love for Jesus ourselves. This Love we have for Jesus was a Gift. So, ultimately- God keep us saved. But the WAY He keeps us saved- is by progressively changing us (from one realm of Glory to the next- **2Corinthians 3:18**)- so that we love Him MORE and MORE! And it is our Love for God (that was a Gift FROM God) that enables and empowers us to persevere; or endure; or to remain faithful to the End.

Now there is one more component to all of this. Notice that James gives us three examples of what this “enduring” looks like:

1. A farmer waiting for the rains
2. The Old Testament Prophets

3. Job

The Farmer:

James 5:7&8

7 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.

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Now the context here is Persecution and our “enduring” *underneath* that Persecution. So, in the same way as the farmer waits for the Produce- we are to wait- *patiently- faithfully-* for an End to our Troubles. And as we wait for the “early and late” rains- which is a metaphor for the Grace of God- “raining down” Strength and Hope on us- we are encouraged that, as bad as our Pain and Anguish may be-

the Lord is soon to Come and when he does come- He will bring with Him- and End to all our Suffering. So, once again- a futuristic look is in mind here. So, as bad as things may be for us- as believing Christians- the Evil that is against us- is ONLY for this brief Life. Because when the Lord comes- He will bring with Him everlasting Peace and Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. And this is why the Apostle Peter said,

1Peter 1:8&9

8 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,

9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

The Old Testament Prophets

James 5:9&10

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

10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Probably no other group of men in the history of the world were so *maligned*; so *hated*; and so *persecuted* as were the Old Testament Prophets. And

so, James is quick to caution us to NOT complain about our plight here on earth; and especially to NOT turn against each other in the midst of Suffering. Why?

... behold, the Judge is standing right at the door

Once again, James uses the fact that Jesus is soon to come and we MUST get ready for Him. Now even though it has already been over 2,000 years since these things were spoken- and many will turn away- wrongly thinking that the Lord delays His Coming- so, let us **“eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”** (1Corinthians 15:32/Isaiah 22:13). But that is what the pagans say. Because when you compare the time span that the Lord has been away with Eternity- it seems like nothing- like just a moment.

So, part of being saved is that we not only live well; but it is that we also suffer well; and even die well- to the Glory of God. And we do that by looking at the Old Testament Prophets. And using their life as an example of how we can continue to hope and continue to believe- even as we suffer and are persecuted.

Job:

James 5:11

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.

The reason that the Trials and Sufferings and Persecutions and Afflictions of the individuals of the Bible are recorded for us on the pages of inspired Scripture is so that when we find ourselves going through *similar* circumstances- we will know how to act; and what to think; and that our Faith will be confirmed.

If the Bible had been written by a group of religious geniuses- it would NOT contain all the “dirty laundry” (Sins) of its heroes. And it also would NOT have contained all of struggles that these people went through to believe and trust in God and in Jesus. But the Bible was written by “holy men” as they were “moved” by God the Holy Spirit. And so, it DOES contain all of the sins and all of the weaknesses and all of the struggles of the heroes. Because the Bible itself says,

1Corinthians 10:6

Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

So, we are *warned*; we are *challenged*; we are *cautioned*; and we are *encouraged* by reading what happened to our heroes- as they struggled to *believe*; as they struggled to *obey*; and as they struggled to *do* according to what God had spoken.

Job suffered unmercifully- as his Faith was tried. And the Issue was: Did Job really believe? Did he treasure God MORE than his great wealth; his children; or even his own health? And the Answer that comes from this suffering saint is, “YES!” Job DID believe. He DID trust in God; and he DID see God as being MORE valuable than anything else!

And James reminds us that not only did Job suffer- but in the End- God restored EVERYTHING to him and blessed him above measure! And James said,

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.

Now there were at last four different Divine Purposes for Job’s Suffering:

1. To test Job’s Faith (prove it to be genuine)
2. To thwart satan’s effort to destroy Job’s Faith
3. To strengthen Job’s Faith (by being able to see God more clearly)
4. To bless Job abundantly

So, what are we to make of this? Is it then a Promise from God that if you suffer great hardship- you will have everything restored to you toward the end of your life? If so, then why are there so many, who suffer unspeakable things here in this life who NEVER see a Restoration at the end of their lives? What are we to make of the millions of nameless souls who trusted in Jesus; and who put their Hope in God- who were treated brutally all during their lives; and then were murdered by evil men and thrown into a pit to rot? Where was that Promise for them?

Dear friends, I suggest to you that what happened to Job at the End of his life is recorded for us- as a natural example of an infinitely *greater* spiritual Truth: that AFTER we have lived a life of Pain and Anguish and Suffering on the earth- AFTER we have *continued* to believe; and *continued* to hope; and *continued* to obey; and *continued* to glorify God- even as we burned- we will be with the Lord- in Heaven! Because, as James reminds us here- Evil can ONLY affect us in this life. And this life is but a vapor compared with Eternity.

Now I told you that what James says in this Passage doesn’t sit well with most Americans- even most American Christians. Because we are used to having

it all right now- or at least having the opportunity to have it all right now. And that access to “instant gratification” has hindered us from having an eternal outlook about these Issues.

But James speaks as one, who NEVER saw an End to unjust and horrific Suffering. The Christians of his day were persecuted by the Jews and by the Romans and by other Gentiles. And for the first 300 years of its existence- Christianity was an illegal and persecuted Religion. You came to Jesus for Salvation and it was almost guaranteed that you would be beaten and imprisoned- maybe even killed.

And yet, the Gospel was preached; and sinners came to Jesus for Forgiveness and to be “get Right” with God. And they were persecuted; and attacked; and accused; and beaten; and imprisoned; and they suffered and were murdered. But they stayed faithful! And they sang praises as they were burned at the stake! And they remained steadfast and unmovable- always abounding in the Work of the Lord!

Because these saints KNEW something; they didn’t hope or guess or wonder- they KNEW something that we need to know...

Hebrews 10:34

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Dear friends, James wants us to understand that it is KNOWING about that “better and lasting” Possession- that will empower us to suffer well- for God’s Glory (joyfully accept the seizure of our Property). And our Reward- MIGHT be here on earth- to some degree- but our Reward will be- IN ITS FULLNESS - in Heaven- when we are with the Lord. And that is where we will finally realize what we merely hope for now:

Psalm 16:11b

... In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

James wants us to focus our eyes on Jesus- and how we may glorify Him IN our Sufferings- rather than simply looking for an End to our Pain. And that is why James said,

We count those blessed who endured...

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.