



The Letter of James  
**Bible Study Session 13**  
**James 5:7-11**

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**Greek NT**

<5:7> Μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου. ἰδοὺ ὁ γεωργὸς ἐκδέχεται τὸν τίμιον καρπὸν τῆς γῆς μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἕως λάβῃ προϊῶνον καὶ ὄψιμον. <5:8> μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς, στηρίζετε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν. <5:9> μὴ στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ' ἀλλήλων ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἕστηκεν. <5:10> ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε, ἀδελφοί, τῆς κακοπαθείας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοῦ προφήτου οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου. <5:11> ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνὸς ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτίρμων.

**Die Gute Nachricht Bibel**

7 Liebe Brüder und Schwestern, haltet geduldig aus, bis der Herr kommt! Seht, wie der Bauer voller Geduld auf die kostbare Frucht der Erde wartet. Er weiß, dass sie zum Wachsen den Herbstregen und den Frühjahrsregen braucht. 8 Auch ihr müsst geduldig ausharren! Fasst Mut; denn der Tag, an dem der Herr kommt, ist nahe. 9 Klagt nicht übereinander, sonst muss Gott euch verurteilen. Der Richter steht schon vor der Tür. 10 Liebe Brüder und Schwestern, denkt an die Propheten, die im Auftrag des Herrn geredet haben. Nehmt euch ein Beispiel daran, wie standhaft sie alles ertrugen, was man ihnen antat. 11 Sie alle, die durchgehalten haben, preisen wir glücklich. Ihr habt gehört, wie geduldig Ijob die Proben ertrug, die ihm auferlegt wurden, und wisst, wie der Herr ihn am Ende belohnt hat. Der Herr ist voller Liebe und Erbarmen.

**NRSV**

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, F24 until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

**NLT**

7 Dear brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who eagerly look for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They patiently wait for the precious harvest to ripen. 8 You, too, must be patient. And take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Don't grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you. For look! The great Judge is coming. He is standing at the door! 10 For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. Job is an example of a man who endured patiently. From his experience we see how the Lord's plan finally ended in good, for he is full of tenderness and mercy.

**The Study of the Text:<sup>1</sup>**

**Context of our passage:**

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF TEXT  
 Of James<sup>2</sup>

PRAESCRPTIO		1.1
<b>BODY</b>		1.2-5.20
Facing Trials	1-194	1.2-12
God and Temptation	1-15	1.13-18
	16-24	
The Word and Piety	25-37	1.19-27
Faith and Partiality	38-55	2.1-13
Faith and Works	56-72	2.14-26
Controlling the Tongue	73-93	3.1-12
True and False Wisdom	94-102	3.13-18

<sup>1</sup>With each study we will ask two basic questions. First, what was the most likely meaning that the first readers of this text understood? This is called the 'historical meaning' of the text. That must be determined, because it becomes the foundation for the second question, "What does the text mean to us today?" For any applicational meaning of the text for modern life to be valid it must grow out of the historical meaning of the text. Otherwise, the perceived meaning becomes false and easily leads to wrong belief.

<sup>2</sup>Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, *A Study Manual of James: Greek Text* (Fort Worth: Scripta Publications, Inc., 1988), 285. **Statements** indicate core thought expressions in the text as a basis for schematizing the rhetorical structure of the text. These are found in the Study Manual and also at the James Study internet site.

Solving Divisions	103-133	4.1-10
Criticism	134-140	4.11-12
Leaving God Out	141-146	4.13-17
Danger in Wealth	147-161	5.1-6
Persevering under Trial	162-171	5.7-11
Swearing	172-174	5.12
Reaching Out to God	175-193	5.13-18
Reclaiming the Wayward	194	5.19-20

### Literary and Historical Settings:

The literary context of 5:7-11 is primarily found in its link to 5:1-6. James' direct address to the "brethren" inside the Christian movement signals his targeted audience for these verses. But when one understands the connecting link of the "just one" in 5:6 as an illusion both to Jesus and to the believers being victimized by the evil landowners, it becomes clear that James' pronouncement of doom on these wealthy aristocrats is to be taken as assurance to the victimized believers that they can trust the justice of God. A just God would bring down His wrath on the horrific abuses of the peasant Jewish farmers who had been dispossessed of their land and essentially turned into slaves working for these aristocrats.

The non-Christian segment of these abuses farmers became the core of the Zealot Revolt that inflamed Palestine by the 60s of the first century and eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. Certainly the Christians among these peasant farmers were tempted to join the insurrection against the Romans and the Jewish aristocrats. But James sought to prevent this and to say that Christ has a different path for them to follow. Essentially his emphasis was for them to trust the justice of God and to wait on Him to rectify the wrongs and injustices.

In the violent and largely lawless world of James' day, this was a viable option. As chapter 2 has already indicated, the wealthy controlled the court system. Thus any legal recourse these peasants might take would be fruitless and only worsen their situation. The Zealots offered the option of violent reaction, but as the first Jewish war revealed, this option was ultimately useless and backfired on these peasants who took part. James saw in God righteousness and justice that was active and certain. He encouraged these believers to opt to trust their God in the mist of the injustices they were suffering.

In the modern world with most believers, three options are available in the midst of injustice. Usually the legal system and the courts of most western countries offer the possibility of justice and rectification of wrong. Although this option wasn't available to James' initial readers, it is open to readers today. But modern believers seeking retribution in the courts for wrongs should be careful not to allow this option to cause them to step away from God and trust in Him to bring about justice. James' encouragement to his first readers remains viable and important to us today.

### Exegesis of the Text:

#### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

- 162 <sup>5.7</sup> Therefore  
**be patient,**  
brothers,  
until the coming of the Lord.
- 163 Behold,  
**the farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth,**  
being patient for it,  
until he receives the early and later rains.
- 164 <sup>5.8</sup> **You also be patient,**
- 165 **--- strengthen your hearts,**  
because the coming of the Lord is near.

166 <sup>5.9</sup> **Stop complaining against one another,**  
brothers,  
lest you be judged;

167 **the Judge stands at the door.**

168 <sup>5.10</sup> **take as an example . . . the prophets**  
brothers who spoke  
of long-suffering in the name of the Lord  
and  
of patience

169 <sup>5.11</sup> Behold,  
**we call blessed those who endure;**

170 **you have heard of the endurance of Job**  
and

171 **you have seen the outcome**  
which the Lord brought about,  
that the Lord is compassionate  
and  
merciful.

**Summary of Rhetorical Structure:**

The rhetorical structure of this pericope is somewhat more complex than most of those in James. The thought flow moves from the initial admonition of his Christian readers to persevere (statement 162) with an example taken from the natural world -- the Jewish farmer, mostly in Galilee (statement 163) -- serving as the inspiration to patience. This is quickly reinforced with two admonitions, the first one (statement 164) repeating the initial admonition (statement 162) and the second one (statement 165) reinforcing the prior one but with different wording. These statements comprise the first section of the passage (statements 162 - 165).

The second section of the passage (statements 166 and 167) almost seem to be an interruption of the thought flow, before the return to patience with more inspiring examples in the third section (statements 168 - 171). This break in thought flow with verse nine has puzzled modern commentators greatly over the past couple of centuries of interpretative history. Seemingly, statements 166 and 167 were intended as a warning against a negativism toward others in the midst of facing real stress and difficulty. From our experience as humans, we know all too well when we are under huge pressure personally the temptation toward being sharp and impatient with people around us builds to new heights. Perhaps this is why verse nine was inserted in the middle of the discussion advocating patience, although many modern commentators aren't convinced by this so-called 'psychological explanation' for the presence of verse nine here. Whatever the reason for its inclusion, one thing is certain: in the history of the copying of the Greek manuscripts of James no manuscript or family of manuscripts ever omits verse nine.

The third section of the passage (statements 168 - 171) resumes the encouragement to becoming patient by a look back at the Jewish past with a reminder of how blessed of God (statement 169) certain individuals were considered to be when they exhibited patience under difficulty. Two examples are placed on the table for consideration: the Old Testament prophets as a group (statement 168) and Job (statements 170 - 171).

**Exegetical Understanding:**

**1) How do the eschatological references here compare to the picture painted elsewhere in James? in James 5:1-6?**

<p><b>James 5:7-9 (NRSV).</b> 7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!</p>	<p><b>James 5:1-6 (NRSV).</b> 1 Come now, you men of wealth, give yourselves to weeping and crying because of the bitter troubles which are coming to you. 2 Your wealth is unclean and insects have made holes in your clothing. 3 Your gold and your silver are wasted and their waste will be a witness against you, burning into your flesh. You have put by your store in the last days. 4 See, the money which you falsely kept back from the workers cutting the grass in your field, is crying out against you; and the cries of those who took in your grain have come to the ears of the Lord of armies. 5 You have been living delicately on earth and have taken your pleasure; you have made your hearts fat for a day of destruction. 6 You have given your decision against the upright man and have put him to death. He puts up no fight against you.</p>
<p><b>James 1:12 (NRSV).</b> 12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.</p>	<p><b>James 2:12-13 (NRSV).</b> 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.</p>
<p><b>James 4:12 (NRSV).</b> 12 There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?</p>	<p><b>James 5:20 (NRSV).</b> 20 you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.</p>

Identify the various elements of end time activities alluded to in the verses? Then describe what they are talking about. What is the one element found in all these verses?

**2) Describe how the heroic examples in the passage encourage the reader to be more patient?**

The Farmer:

163 Behold,  
**the farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth,**  
being patient for it,  
until he receives the early and later rains.

The Old Testament Prophets:

168 <sup>5.10</sup> **take as an example . . . the prophets**  
brothers who spoke  
of long-suffering in the name of the Lord  
and  
of patience

Job:

170 **you have heard of the endurance of Job**  
and  
171 **you have seen the outcome**  
which the Lord brought about,  
that the Lord is compassionate  
and  
merciful.

### 3) Compare James' use of inspiring, heroic figures to that of other ancient Jewish and Christian writers.

**1 Maccabees 2:49-64 (NRSV).** 49 Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons: "Arrogance and scorn have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious anger. 50 Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors. 51 "Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name. 52 Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? 53 Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. 54 Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. 55 Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. 56 Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. 57 David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever. 58 Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. 59 Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. 60 Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions. 61 "And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. 62 Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms. 63 Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished. 64 My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor.

**Sirach 44:1-23 (NRSV; this topic continues through chapter 50).** 1 Let us now sing the praises of famous men, our ancestors in their generations. 2 The Lord apportioned to them great glory, his majesty from the beginning. 3 There were those who ruled in their kingdoms, and made a name for themselves by their valor; those who gave counsel because they were intelligent; those who spoke in prophetic oracles; 4 those who led the people by their counsels and by their knowledge of the people's lore; they were wise in their words of instruction; 5 those who composed musical tunes, or put verses in writing; 6 rich men endowed with resources, living peacefully in their homes — 7 all these were honored in their generations, and were the pride of their times. 8 Some of them have left behind a name, so that others declare their praise. 9 But of others there is no memory; they have perished as though they had never existed; they have become as though they had never been born, they and their children after them. 10 But these also were godly men, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten; 11 their wealth will remain with their descendants, and their inheritance with their children's children. 12 Their descendants stand by the covenants; their children also, for their sake. 13 Their offspring will continue forever, and their glory will never be blotted out. 14 Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name lives on generation after generation. 15 The assembly declares their wisdom, and the congregation proclaims their praise. 16 Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up, an example of repentance to all generations. 17 Noah was found perfect and righteous; in the time of wrath he kept the race alive; therefore a remnant was left on the earth when the flood came. 18 Everlasting covenants were made with him that all flesh should never again be blotted out by a flood. 19 Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory. 20 He kept the law of the Most High, and entered into a covenant with him; he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved faithful. 21 Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring; that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring like the stars, and give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. 22 To Isaac also he gave the same assurance for the sake of his father Abraham. The blessing of all people and the covenant 23 he made to rest on the head of Jacob; he acknowledged him with his blessings, and gave him his inheritance; he divided his portions, and distributed them among twelve tribes.

**Hebrews 11:1-40 (NRSV).** 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith. 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old — and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." 13 All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, 18 of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." 19 He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, "bowing in worship over the top of his staff." 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial. 23 By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

32 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets — 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented — 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. 39 Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

**Matthew 23:29-31 (NRSV).** 29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves

of the righteous, 30 and you say, "If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." 31 Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. 33 You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?

Describe how heroes of the past were used by the writers?

4) Compare James' use of Job as an example to other ancient Jewish and Christian writers. James is the only New Testament writer to mention Job but others in ancient Judaism and early Christianity often referred to him as an inspiring example. How does James' use compare to the two examples below?

**James 5:11 (NRSV).** 11 Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

**Testament of Job 12.1-19.** 1 After these three had finished singing hymns, did I Nahor (Neros) brother of Job sit down next to him, as he lay down. 2 And I heard the marvelous (great) things of the three daughters of my brother, one always succeeding the other amidst awful silence. 3 And I wrote down this book containing the hymns except the hymns and signs of the [holy] Word, for these were the great things of God. 4 And Job lay down from sickness on his couch, yet without pain and suffering, because his pain did not take strong hold of him on account of, the charm of the girdle which he had wound around himself. 5 But after three days Job saw the holy angels come for his soul, and instantly he rose and took the cithara and gave it to his daughter Day (Yemima). 6 And to Kassia he gave a censer (with perfume = Kassia, and to Amalthea's horn (= music) he gave a timbrel in order that they might bless the holy angels who came for his soul.

7 And they took these, and sang, and played on the psaltery and praised and glorified God in the holy dialect.

8 And after this he came He who sitteth upon the great chariot and kissed Job, while his three daughters looked on, but the others saw it not. 9 And He took the soul of Job and He soared upward, taking her (the soul) by the arm and carrying her upon the chariot, and He went towards the East. 10 His body, however, was brought to the grave while the three daughters marched ahead, having put on their girdles and singing hymns in praise of God.

11 Then held Nahor (Nereos) his brother and his seven sons, with the rest of the people and the poor, the orphans and the feeble ones, a great mourning over him, saying:

12 "Woe unto us, for today has been taken from us the strength of the feeble, the light of the blind, the father of the orphans;

13 The receiver of strangers has been taken off the leader of the erring, the cover of the naked, the shield of the widows. Who would not mourn for the man of God! 14 And as they were mourning in this and in that form, they would not suffer him to be put into the grave. 15 After three days, however, he was finally put into the grave, like one in sweet slumber, and he received the name of the good (beautiful) who will remain renowned throughout all generations of the world.

16 He left seven sons and three daughters, and there were no daughters found on earth as fair as the daughters of Job. 17 The name of Job was formerly Jobab, and he was called Job by the Lord. 18 He had lived before his plague eighty five years, and after the plague he took the double share of all; hence also his year's he doubled, which is 170 years. Thus he lived altogether 255 years. 19 And, he saw sons of his sons unto the fourth generation. It is written that he will rise up with those whom the Lord will reawaken. To our Lord by glory. Amen.

**1 Clement 17.1-4.** Let us be imitators also of those who in goat-skins and sheep-skins went about proclaiming the coming of Christ; I mean Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel among the prophets, with those others to whom a like testimony is borne [in Scripture]. Abraham was specially honoured, and was called the friend of God; yet he, earnestly regarding the glory of God, humbly declared, "I am but dust and ashes." *Moreover, it is thus written of Job, "Job was a righteous man, and blameless, truthful, God-fearing, and one that kept himself from all evil." But bringing an accusation against himself, he said, "No man is free from defilement, even if his life be but of one day."* Moses was called faithful in all God's house; and through his instrumentality, God punished Egypt with plagues and tortures. Yet he, though thus greatly honoured, did not adopt lofty language, but said, when the divine oracle came to him out of the bush, "Who am I, that You send me? I am a man of a feeble voice and a slow tongue." And again he said, "I am but as the smoke of a pot."

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

1) Who are your 'heroes of the faith' that inspire you to serve God?

2) How would you describe your level of 'patience and long-suffering'?

3) How much time do you spend griping about other people, especially against fellow believers?