

Men to Men Ministry
Lesson 24 in the Letter of James
Godly Purity

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James 5:10,11^{NASB}

10 As an example, brothers and sisters, 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.

Introduction

As a Christian, why do we do the things you do?

We go to church, we read His divinely inspired words, we pray, we study, we feed those in need, we enjoy each other, we forgive each other when asked and some time even before we are asked.

Number of reasons:

- I do because I have asked for forgiveness.
- I do because I assume I am forgiven.
- I do because I am loved.

Nevertheless, is the reason behind all the flurry of action is that because I have done something, something whether small or grandiose, that I expect something back from God? Do I shed a tear in response to a spiritual song from the pulpit and call it blessed? Am I blessed because I expect to be blessed and not actually blessed by God? Does God reach down His omnipotent finger and touch my soul to make me blessed, or is it just an emotional response to external stimuli of music and perceived praise?

Do I act the way I do because I think God cares? Or for that matter, can I move God to do something by my something?

How do I, the finite effect the infinite? Does it matter to God if I use my turn signals correctly? Is the universe changed in any way if I eat an orange instead of a Reese cup?

Ponder with me. Are my blessings caused by I am a good person? Are my trials, my tribulations caused by my behaviors? Why do good things happen to bad people? Why do bad things happen to good people?

I ask these questions because James states flatly in the 5th chapter verse 11 **behold, we count those blessed who endured.**

There are three words that must be completely understood to have any hope to understand our text.

1. **Blessed:** In James 5:11 it states, “**behold, we count those blessed who endured.**” If we take James at his word, he was saying, it was not miracles, it was not healings, it was not being holy, it was not great acts of bravery, it is not being in church and raising your hand in the appropriate way, BUT they survived.

It must be understood these words written by James were spread prior to the written words of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Most of what the New Testament church lived by was from preaching. A word of mouth proclamation and teaching from the remembrance of the apostles and the called teachers. Therefore, when James uses this “BLESSED” word he is describing an attitude of life and not of action. This word is the same words used by Jesus in the sermon on the mount. It literally means the word happy.

It is also important to understand who is calling who blessed. The messianic Christian culture had its base of understanding through the teachings of the rabbis. The rabbis would constantly use this word blessed to describe somebody who was full of grace and mercy, and was content in whatever state they were. So when James says behold we count those blessed the word we is the inclusion all the Jewish teachings that were passed down from rabbi to rabbi and written in the **Tanakh**.

The second word to help us to understand our scripture is **compassion**. It is often confused with Mercy. There is a difference between compassion and mercy.

2. **Compassion:** The Greek word often translated as "compassion" is "σπλαγχνίζομαι" (splachnizomai), which literally refers to a deep, gut-wrenching feeling of empathy or pity. It's an emotional response that moves a person to action. For instance, in the story of the Good Samaritan, when the Samaritan sees the wounded man, he is moved with compassion (Luke 10:33).
3. **Mercy:** The Greek word for "merciful" is *polýsplachnos*). This term goes beyond just feeling pity or empathy; it involves taking active steps to alleviate another's suffering or need. Mercy is often associated with forgiveness and benevolence. For example, in the Beatitudes, Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

While both words involve a sense of care and concern for others, "compassion" emphasizes the emotional or attitude of the person, and "mercy" focuses on the action taken to help and forgive.

Exposition

What kind of person is blessed? What kind of person is qualified to receive God's happiness? What kind of man can God use?

"THE MAN GOD USES"

Seems to me that we all desire to see the power of God demonstrated through our lives. We want to be used of God. It is not just enough to get into the gate of heaven and camp on the edge. When we read of Peter and how people would try and position themselves, the sickly, the lame, the needy, just so that Peter's shadow might fall upon them for healing it makes quite a picture. I would suppose Peter could be called blessed.

When you read of Paul and hear stories of people touching his apron for divine healings that were transmitted through sweatbands and many other great miracles. I would suppose you can call Paul blessed.

When we read of Daniel and his ability to interpret dreams, of him being delivered from a lion's den and his keeping of a dietary requirement to keep himself holy before God. I would suppose you could call Daniel blessed.

We read of the mighty works and life of Moses we want to set him apart as more than mortal. I would suppose you could call Moses blessed.

The list grows long as we hear of great miracles, and even greater deeds. These men we hold in awe, as though they were something special or superior. When we arrive in heaven then the roll is called up there, I would not step in front of any one of these special blessed men. I can't imagine even burping in their presence. Their holy awe would be something to be admired, revered and placed on a high pedestal.

We elevate these men to some sort of superhuman category. What the problem with this glorification of these men it seems to disqualify ourselves from God's service because we are human and we see them as greater than ourselves. Nevertheless, they did not see themselves that way. It was Moses who said "I am not eloquent." It was Jeremiah who said, "I am too young."

So how can God use me?

I get hungry, I get tired, I get cross. I fall short of God's glorious ideal. I get discouraged, I get scared, my pain seems to sap my strength. My day is not long enough to do what is expected. How can God use me, this deeply flawed, constantly falling human being? God doesn't use just beautiful people.

WHAT KIND OF MEN DOES GOD USE?

God uses those who are available.

Paul was willful and ugly, Peter was high tempered, James was a brother to Jesus who did not believe him to be anything special and at one point wanted to put him away and keep him from embarrassing the family. Everyone who has called himself as belonging to God, the first attitude of that belief is availability.

Key thought:

God wants to use you. Your availability more important than ability, is the criteria. Romans 12:1 states, ***"I beseech ye therefore brethren by mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service."*** Give God a chance in your life; make yourself available to Him. It is a decision to let God have what you are right now. You have only one life, if you will just use what you have for God, He will then give you more.

Two examples of used men

When James provides two examples in our scripture, they are not from the LAW of Moses. Instead he uses an example from the **NEVI'UM** the prophets and the from Job from the **KETUVIM**. The conclusion one must make from this is that James was exemplifying not adherence to the stated unmovable law but from real people, flawed people, used people. Both examples are about attitudes and not necessarily about actions.

First James asks us to look to the prophets and then to JOB. Both the prophets and Job were admired by Jewish thought for understanding the relationships between suffering, patience and endurance.

Attitude after availability

Suffering

The first word we must examine is suffering. This is an attitude caused by external events. I have no choice of the happenstance. ..IT HAPPENS. What James was saying through the words he used is that suffering was not the issue or the cause. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. It happens to all of us. Things do not happen as planned and the result slaps you in the face. And we have the choice to respond. The issue is this response carries a reward or a penalty. The injury is to be the cause of the attitudes of suffering, patience and endurance. Suffering is an attitude of martyrdom. Suffering in James 5:10 is the suffering of evil, trouble, distress, to be afflicted. It is the bad things that happen to good people. The picture that James was trying to example was not that they were special men, cut out of some holy cloth, but men who were available, willing to suffer, and come out at the other end with victory.

Suffering which James was referring was not caused by evil done by the blessed but blessing upon those whom evil was thrust.

Suffering is grabbing the arms of the chair when the pain becomes unbearable and saying to ourselves, "This too will pass".

Patience

Patience is the ability to remain calm and composed while waiting for something to happen or for someone to act. It often involves a sense of acceptance and tranquility in the face of delays, challenges, or difficulties. Patience is more about the mental and emotional state of being able to tolerate waiting without frustration or anger. Patience is an attitude.

Endurance

Endurance, on the other hand, is the capacity to withstand prolonged physical or mental effort, hardship, or stress. It's about maintaining strength and perseverance over an extended period, often in the face of significant obstacles or discomfort. Endurance is more about the ability to keep going and pushing through difficulties, regardless of the circumstances. Endurance is about an attitude driven effort. Endurance is an attitude of resolve to keep on keeping on.

Whether suffering, patience or endurance are attitudes in response to external circumstances.

If I get a flat tire and I pull over into the far edge of the road. **Suffering** is being late to your appointment, the consequence of the flat tire. **Patience** is waiting for the tow truck with an assurance it will show up with a jack. **Endurance** is the attitude of resolve to keep on keeping on.

In essence, suffering is gritting you teeth, patience is about waiting peacefully, while endurance is about persevering through tough conditions.

What James was showing us in our scripture is that being used of God requires first availability then a correct attitude.

It is saying, when a negative, or bad happens that event should cause an righteous attitude and not an action. The word includes both the event and the associated attitude. This uncontrollable circumstance causes an attitude not an action. This attitude is patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs. An event which causes an attitude

AGAIN, IT IS NOT ACTION. It is a frame of mind.

ALL THREE attitudes of patience, endurance and suffering are closely related.

Jewish viewpoint of the sovereignty of God.

In Christianity, God's sovereignty is the idea that God has the right and power to rule over his creation. It's also known as the lordship of God.

Key characteristics of God's sovereignty:

- ✓ **Omnipotence:** God has unstoppable power over the universe
- ✓ **Providence:** God controls what happens and what doesn't happen
- ✓ **Kingship:** God is the King and his will prevails
- ✓ **Freedom:** God's sovereignty includes his freedom
- ✓ **Goodness:** God's sovereignty is in keeping with his goodness, righteousness, holiness, and impeccability

Sovereignty and human free will

The relationship between God's sovereignty and human free will is a key topic in discussions about the meaning of human choice. For example, God's sovereignty doesn't violate human free will, but instead accomplishes his plan through human choices.

The examples of the prophets and Job were given to show the appropriate response to situations beyond our control.

Three major writings examine this unforeseen evil that happens. The current view of these happenstances are found in three separate pictures of circumstances beyond control. There is a recurring theme throughout the Jewish Bible:

- What do I do with the sovereignty of God?
- Are all the bad things that happen to the Nation Abraham through the ages caused by God?
- Is God the source of Bad stuff?

Wisdom Literature on the sovereignty of God.

Three books try to understand these questions. These three are part of the WISDOM LITERATURE.

1. **Proverbs.** It makes the case that God is wise and just. He created the world with a divine order of things. This order was set to make the world fair to all. The righteous would be justly rewarded and the wicked would be punished. To answer the sovereignty question the answer from Proverbs is **YOU GET WHAT YOU DESERVE.**
2. **Ecclesiastes.** In deference to Proverbs the writers of Ecclesiastes does not always agree in their view of the sovereignty of God. The world we live in is not always fair and just in the eyes of men. From the human point of view God is unpredictable. Looking at the world around it is hard to understand the providence of God. Life is nothing more than smoke. Life is always on a downward path. And there are only a few that have it all. From the viewpoint of Ecclesiastes: **YOU DON'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU DESERVE.**
3. Lastly here comes the problematic **Job.**

Quite a story. It starts in the Heavenly throne room God, Angels, and Sons of God. One of these angels named SATAN.....(one that is opposed). God notices SATAN in the corner and asks, "where did you come from."

The reply is, "Down below, I was walking around looking at the lot of man of suffering and evil and despair."

God, “did you happen to see one of my best. JOB? The one who is blameless, upright, fearing me, and always turning from evil?”

“YES I DID”, said SATAN. “BUT is Job all that you say of him?” “Is JOB good because of all things you do for him?” “Does he do because he is blessed by you?” “Are all the blessings of life provided by you the cause of his being the way he is?” “Is your sovereignty over circumstances controlling this so called blessed man?” “Lord, do you want to prove the life, attitude, and actions of JOB?”

God responded with a sly smile, already knowing the answer. An answer the opposer has yet to learn.

In response Satan said to God, “OK Lord, take all the trappings of life away and see who he really is. To reveal that Job in it only in it for the perks.” “LET ME TEST HIM that we both might see.”

“You may test Job but you may not hurt him.”

Everything was taken away from Job. His family, his fortune, every sheep, his house was destroyed, lost all his extra clothing and there was nothing left.

Reminds me of the song sung by B.J.Thomas:

*Raindrops are falling on my head
And just like the guy whose feet are too big for his bed
Nothing seems to fit
Those raindrops are falling on my head, they keep falling
But there's one thing I know
The blues they send to meet me
Won't defeat me
It won't be long 'till happiness steps up to greet me
Raindrops keep falling on my head
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turning red
Crying's not for me
'Cause, I'm never gonna stop the rain by complaining
Because I'm free
Nothing's worrying me
It won't be long 'till happiness steps up to greet me*

But it does not get better so Job starts a full chapter of lament, singing “Why me LORD.” It becomes a tirade of disappointment. Job curses the day he was born. “I might as well crawl off into a hole and die.”

Then his “friends show up”. Hospitality check. Just stopping by to make sure you are OK. But instead of helping, instead of helping him out of his slough of dispond they tried to tell Job the why of his state of gloom, dispare and excessive misery. “YOUR CLAMITY WAS CAUSED BY YOUR SIN. So what great sin did you do?” They even tried to help Job to visualize the possibilities by giving him a list of possibilities. YOU HAVE TO HAVE DONE SOMETHING TO BE PUNISHED SO MUCH BY GOD.

JOB insists “I AM INNOCENT OF any SIN.” The book is an emotional roller coaster, up and down. From confidence to the depths of doubt. And finally Job makes a call to 911 emergency number for God at the time. Job looks up to God and

makes accusations of the bias of God, the unfairness of God, and even goes as far as to accuse God of corruption.

God tells Job it is time for a road trip. God takes him up to see the vastness of the universe, to see all the stars and expanse between them. “How grand is this?” God reveals the seen and the unseen, the big and the small. God demonstrated to Job that He was the creator, the organizer, the controller. God taught Job a few lessons:

- GOD knows everything
- Demonstrates to Job the nature of animals with view of two animals fighting and tearing at each other. Their actions are not evil. Their actions were a part of who they are as created.
- God’s point of view is not Job’s point of view It is too big to understand.
- This is what God calls wisdom. Wisdom greater than JOB. It is God’s wisdom and not Job’s wisdom. Job did not have by his nature by the enough to understand the ways of God.
- Job was incapable of understanding the very nature of God. Job could not understand the providence of God. It was too complex.
- Job learned a new sense of humility in his humanity.
- Our vocation is to stay humble and learn FAITH. **IT IS DOING WHILE WAITING.**

In the end of the story Job wins. He get double what he lost.

- ✓ Job was blessed and he was faithful to his God
- ✓ Job questioned God and yet he was faithful
- ✓ Job was set on by friends to explain the terribleness. But Job was faithful to God
- ✓ Job was overwhelmed by the character of God and voiced his inability to know. But Job was faithful to God
- ✓ Job was restored, Job was still faithful.

Was this suffering..... YES!

WAS this patience.... Not so much

Was this endurance... YES!

Paul would latter restate this as “I am content in whatever state I am”

Conclusion

Do you act as if God cares what you do?

Can we move God to do something by our doing something?

That question was never answered, it is unknowable, it is outside of our created mental abilities to understand.

Why do good things happen to bad people? UNKNOWABLE

Why do bad thing happen to good people? UNKNOWABLE

Will good things happen to me if I go to church? UNKNOWABLE

But as James ended this section said:
I have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

Are we to know the how and the when or even the if? **UNKNOWNABLE.**
Can we line up all the circumstances in our lives and say they are all orchestrated by God? **UNKNOWNABLE.**
Can I understand the relationship between free will and the sovereignty of God? **UNKNOWNABLE.**
Proverbs says, **YOU GET WHAT YOU DESERVE.**
Ecclesiastes says, **YOU GET WHAT YOU GET.**
Job says, **IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT I GET.**

But I know who he is. And his existence is not dependent upon my faith.
I have a placard in my office that reads: **BE PATIENT, OUR PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS ANSWERED, BUT NOT ALWAYS ON THE EXACT DAY OR LIKE WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE.**

REFERENCES

It's all Greek to me.

It is very important to understand the historical context of each word. To understand how the audience of the book of James interpreted the words of James in their own language of Greek is very important for us to understand what James is trying to tell us.

Location	Greek word	NASB	Meaning
James 5:10	hypódeigma	Example	a sign suggestive of anything, delineation of a thing, representation, figure, copy an example: for imitation of the thing to be imitated for a warning, of a thing to be shunned
James 5:10	kakopátheia	Suffering	the suffering of evil, i.e. trouble, distress, afflicted
James 5:10	makrothymía	Patience	patience, forbearance, internal and external control in a difficult circumstance, which control could exhibit itself by delaying an action
James 5:11	makarízō	Blessed	to call blessed; to consider blessed

James 5:11	hypoménō	Endured	to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee to preserve: under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one's faith in Christ. to endure, bear bravely and calmly: ill treatments
James 5:11	oiktírmōn	Compassion	To have mercy in response to action.
James 5:11	polýsplachnos	Merciful	full of pity, very kind

DIVISIONS OF THE JEWISH BIBLE

The Jewish Bible is divided into three parts, the TORAH, the NEVI'IM and the KETVIM. These three sections are all associated with the word that includes the first syllable of each and is called the TANAKH

The TORAH what we call the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) is the law as given to Moses. He was the number one prophet in the minds of the Jews. There was no one like him. He was blessed and blessed again. The Sadducees accepted these five writings as the supreme law of the entire Jewish race. It was seen as a list of things you simply did do. They called for absolute conformance. Sin was delt with one time a year and administered by them. TORAH means instruction. These five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were the product of the first prophet.

The second part of the Old Testament was accepted by larger group headed by the Pharisees was the NEVI'IM which means the prophets. It is further divided into the former and the latter prophets. Former Prophets include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings. The Latter Prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and a group of twelve minor prophets. The purpose of the prophets was to make a distinction between what a righteous person was and what a wicked person was. There was little grey areas between these extremes.

The third part of the Jewish Bible was the KETUVIM, or the writings. It was a division to accumulate all other writings. This third section was further divided into three sections. The SIFREI EVET or the documents of truth. This group included Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. The next section is the MEGILLOT or the scrolls. It was a reference section for the definition of faith. It included the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Ester. The last section or division within the KETUVIM was simply called the other books: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.