

• *Turning point – James addresses the poor*

There comes now a turning-point in our letter at James 5:7. Until this point James obviously has been addressing wealthy upper-class Christians. He has called them 'You rich people'^{□1}. James seems to know that the rich Christians will be the ones who first read his letter. Yet eventually some poorer people will also read what he has to say and now he has a word for them also. In some ways he is repeating what he said in James chapter 1. There he was encouraging the people to be patient^{□2}, to pray^{□3}, to handle their temptations and show compassion to the needy^{□4}. Now he says the same things again especially to the poorer people. They must be patient^{□5}. They must pray^{□6}. They must help each other to recover^{□7}.

□1 5:1a

□2 1:2-4

□3 1:5-8

□4 1:9-27

□5 5:7-12

□6 5:13-18

□7 5:19-20

• *They must be patient and wait for the Lord's coming*

Now again the first thing he has to say to them (as in 1:2– 4) is that they must be patient and wait for the Lord's coming. He has already told them that their cry has reached the ears of God. But although God has heard them He has not yet done anything! So there is only one thing they must do. They must wait! They have already received some encouragement because James has intervened on their behalf. James' letter is itself a sign that God is at work on their behalf.

• *God is at work*

It is a great privilege when God allows us to be afflicted with injustices!

'Be patient therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord'^{□1}. **It is a great privilege when God allows us to be afflicted with injustices!** Of course we do not enjoy it but it is good for us! 'Before I was afflicted I went astray', says Psalm 119. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted'^{□2}. It leads us to grow in the knowledge of God and His ways as never before. This is why we are to rejoice in troubles^{□3}. It brings to us a means of growing in our knowledge of the Lord. It is 'by means of many tribulations' that we get to enter fully into the blessings of God's kingdom^{□4}. And affliction is the most severe when it is fellow Christians or members of our own family who are giving us such bad trouble! Moses supposed that his fellow-Israelites would understand him, but they did not^{□5}.

□1 5:7a

□2 Psalm 119 67,71

□3 1:2

□4 Acts 14:22

□5 Acts 7:25

• *Not pleasant*

• *But this leads to spiritual growth*

• *God sometimes calls upon us to do nothing*

At a time of injustice God sometimes calls upon us to do nothing. 'Be patient... until the coming of the Lord... So you also must be patient...'. Of course there are sometimes situations where we may take some sensible action to protect ourselves and our reputation. But when we are locked into a situation of injustice where we cannot defend ourselves, we must learn to leave room for God to act. The poorer folk among James' people were evidently in a position where they could not do very much to rescue themselves from injustice. James tells them to stand still and see what God will do.

• *At other times we may take some sensible action to protect ourselves and our reputation*

• *See what God will do*

• *The lord's coming – at the end of the world*

So what does James mean by 'the Lord's coming'. Is it the glorious Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? I answer: faith in the glorious end-of-the-world appearing of Jesus is involved in what James says. Sometimes when we are slandered and attacked we will not get vindication until judgement day. And we have to think of it in this way. Sometimes we have to hand over some piece of injustice to God, and get it be cleared up at the judgement seat of Christ, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in glory.

• *Always close and sometimes anticipated*

But I think James has another possibility in mind. The Second Coming of Jesus is **always** close, but in a way that we might not expect. Sometimes 'the coming of the Lord' is **anticipated** when God

anticipated

- When God takes steps to intervene

An illustration – early and latter rain in Jerusalem

- The farmer puts seed into the ground
- And trusts that something is happening
- Both the early and the latter rains vital for a good harvest
- The rain that falls from heaven is a picture of suffering

steps in to intervene. We have to wait until God ‘comes’ – in whatever form that ‘coming’ takes. Jesus was insulted and slandered. He had to wait until God stepped in. In **some** ways Jesus was vindicated in His resurrection, but the world has not totally seen that Jesus is God’s King. Jesus has to **wait** – even now – until all enemies are put down and every knee has to bow to Him. But that day has not yet come. Even Jesus has to wait! It is the same with us. God may give us some help soon. Or we have to leave it until judgement day. Either way we have to wait in patience.

James uses an illustration. ‘Look how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. He shows great patience over it, until he receives the early and latter rain (5:7). So you also must be patient’ (5:8a). The farmer puts seed into the ground but a crop does not come immediately. Before there can be any harvest there must be rain falling upon the ground with seed in it. The farmer has to trust that something is happening in the ground where the seed is, although he cannot see what is happening.

In Jerusalem (and our writer, James of Jerusalem, had experience of Jerusalem weather) the ‘early rain’ generally began in late October or early November. The more rain there was the better the final harvest would be in the fields around the town. There were heavy rains in December-to-February (roughly), then a period of quite heavy rain, and then the ‘latter rain’ was lighter during March-April. The beginning and end of this long rainy season was important to the farmer. The early rains were vital for sowing the seed in soft ground. The continuation right through to the end was vital for the grain to swell to full size ready for the harvest-time after the end of the wet season.

The rain that falls from heaven is James’ way of talking about suffering. The farmer who hoped for a good harvest had to wait right through to the end of the rains. James has already said the Christian facing injustice has to endure to the end. The testing of faith develops perseverance¹. But ‘Perseverance must finish its work’². James calls upon his friends to be ready to endure. ‘Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near’³.

1 5:7
2 5:8a

1 1:3
2 1:4
3 5:8



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters “Slices of Bread” produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable • In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge • Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation • The same material as Slices for the Nations • Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge • Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) • The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations
<p>To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk Details of the availability of <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk</p>		