

## THE COMING OF THE LORD

James 5:7-9

With this verse the scene changes. The Apostle returns to the tones of tenderness with which he began. James is no longer rebuking erring Christians nor lashing the wicked rich. He now starts giving words of encouragement to suffering saints. He encourages them to patience until the second coming of the Lord. They were suffering much, but right would prevail at the return of Christ.

We have the word "patience" mentioned six times in verses seven to eleven. He gives three examples of patience: first, the patience of the farmer waiting for his crop from plowing time to harvest; second, the patience of the prophets; third, the patience of Job. As a special inducement to patience, he holds up the expectation of the Lord's coming. This great event is the blessed culmination which will bring glory to every suffering saint. It is the time of the gathering of the fruit. It is the day of rewards.

The harvest of the earth cannot be obtained in the early day of sowing. There must be, first of all, the toil and labor which is necessary before the fruit can come. A Christian should not be discouraged because he does not immediately enter into his rewards. The Word of God teaches us to be patient. Patience is one of our crying needs. When the author of Hebrews wrote, "For you have need of patience," he put his finger on one of the sore spots of the human frame. Ours is a life of sustained tension, so much so that modern life may be described in terms of hurry, worry, and bury.

Christians today do not have the difficulties and trials of those early saints, but still there is much need of patience. We need patience when we are sick or tried in various other ways. We need to be patient with others. We must be patient with those to whom we bring the gospel. If we labor in the gospel, we need patience to wait for fruit. Sometimes we are greatly provoked and perplexed. It is not right to take things in our own hands, but we must wait patiently for the Lord to work them out. The man who digs gold is willing to spend years of preparation, if need be, before he begins to market his precious ore. The student does not expect commencement, with its subsequent victories of achievement, before he has spent years in preparatory study.

James used the farmer as an example of patience. His work is one of faith and patience. The farmer shows faith in that from the time he plows until fall, he fully expects a crop. It is a long time from plowing to harvest, and he must wait with patience until reaping time comes. There are many things to concern a farmer. Sometimes the spring is too wet and he cannot get into the fields. Sometimes drought hits and the crops dry up. Almost every type of crop has its pests, and these seem to be getting worse with the passing years.

From these examples of the farmer, we should learn to labor diligently for Christ in spite of difficulties and trials. This is the sowing time, but the time of harvest will arrive with the coming of the Lord. If we sow for Christ, we will reap with Him. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). The farmer waits long for a crop, so we can afford to wait longer for a crown of glory.

Affliction and difficulties bring a present harvest too. There are certain lessons which we can only learn in the school of suffering. The sweetest Christians are often suffering ones. We have been greatly blessed by visiting some of the Lord's choice afflicted ones.

Why should the Christian desire to enter into the glory before he knows anything of the pain? Let us note the following:

1. The now and the then of sorrow.

When speaking to His disciples our Lord said, "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Now, we have the sorrow, due to His absence, then, we shall have the sunshine due to His presence.

When Peter was writing to the saints he spoke of the great trials and tribulations through which we must pass, if need be, but for a season, but he said that at the appearing of Jesus Christ all of these things would be found to bring blessing and honor and glory.

2. The now and the then of service.

The work that we are doing for the Lord Jesus Christ, as the days come and go, is not subject to immediate reward.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." However, an immediate reward was not promised.

In writing of the pastor Peter said, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage but being ensamples to the flock." Then, with gracious vision he added, "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Paul wrote that he had fought a good fight, had kept the faith and finished the course, but he did not see an immediate reward. He said that there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him which should be his in that day.

From the very moment that a child of God goes to be with the Lord, he is blessed, because the Bible says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." However, he who rests from his labor does not enter into his reward immediately. His works follow him and when Christ comes the second time He will bring his reward with Him. Let us rejoice in our present service in view of the coming glorious rewards which shall be ours when He comes.

3. The now and the then of sacrifice.

Some have been called to give up much in their following of the Lord. Paul said, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ." He had turned away from the praise and the plaudits,

from the blessings and the benefactions which would have fallen to him in his earthly life in the Sanhedrin. But he would not count that as anything to be regretted; he rather gloried in it. Forgetting everything that he had lost and sacrificed, he said that he was reaching toward the things which were before — "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

4. The now and the then of suffering.

In discussing the coming of the Lord as the acme of the Christian's experience, those who suffer now should remember that they will sing then. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Christ said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

All of this is suggested in the statement, "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

We often read of the early and latter rain. "That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil" (Deuteronomy 11:14). The early rain came in October or November, the latter usually around April. The former was necessary for the plowing and the sowing, the latter was necessary to mature the crop. During the dry season from May to September the ground got dry and hard and could not be worked. If the early rain would not come they could not prepare the ground. The latter rains were very unpleasant but were needed for the crop. So we too are sure to have unpleasant experiences, but they are necessary to the producing of fruit for God. Sunshine is necessary, but all sunshine makes a desert.

These suffering saints were to be patient, waiting for the coming of the Lord, even as the farmer is patient, waiting for the harvest. As Christians we, too, should be willing to wait patiently for the fruit of our labor, and for relief from our trials and perplexities.

Those early Christians were undergoing great trials, were being defrauded and mistreated, while their persecutors were lolling in wealth and luxury. Perhaps some of them were near the slipping point. James told them to endure all of these things for Christ's sake, and when the Lord comes their persecutors would be punished, and they would be rewarded. There is nothing that will stablish the heart like the coming of the Lord.

Our Lord desired that all Christians of all ages live in anticipation of His return. His coming is sure. He said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." The Lord will come, and then we shall reap our harvest. The knowledge of the coming of the Lord should have a salutary effect on our lives. Besides making us patient, it should make us diligent, prayerful, pure, watchful, hopeful and comforted. His coming will afford the believers much joy.

James now turns from patience under trial to the exercise of patience with other Christians. "Grumble not" is very near to the original meaning of "grudge not." Some people, even Christians, are chronic grumblers. They grumble about almost everything and everybody, and almost all the time.

"They grumble when it's morning,  
They grumble when it's night,  
They grumble when it's raining;  
They grumble when it's bright.  
They grumble when it's hot  
They grumble when it's cold,  
They grumble when they're young,  
But a lot more when they're old.

But there's a new location  
Called Hallelujah Street,  
We recommend they move up there  
And be forever sweet.  
Leave grumbling alley vacant,  
Put up 'No Thoroughfare'  
For God will never bless them  
If they are set on living there."

Those early Christians had plenty to upset them, and to put their nerves on edge. Ofttimes they were defrauded, accused, abused, and condemned. When one's nerves are all upset, it is easy to groan and grumble. How easy it is when all goes wrong to take it out on others! Grumbling makes for unhappiness and bitterness. The grumbling Christian will have to answer for this sin before the judgment seat of Christ.