OUR GUARANTEE

After explaining the condition of the rich to the rich, James turns his attention to his “brethren,” who were likely often victims of the rich. While those who live for themselves and at the expense of others should fear the impending future, God’s people should look toward the future with patience and hope. For those against God, the future is worse than they realize; for those who live in surrender to Him, it’s much better than they could ever imagine.

Using parables ranging from agriculture to the devastating story of Job, James reminds his listeners that patience and perseverance are not novel concepts in the realm of the life of faith. Hopeful patience is needed for farmers desiring to feed their families, prophets repeatedly giving the same message to idolatrous nations, a man of God wondering why his circumstances are what they are, and a believer straining with eyes of faith toward the future. In all these circumstances, the individual is blind to the future (even the present!), because they cannot see it clearly. Instead, they must trust the One who can.

In this time of waiting, words continue to reveal the condition of the heart. James warns his listeners not to give utterance to grumblings or swearing, as both bring condemnation and judgment in their wake. “Establish your hearts,” he encourages, “for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8). No matter how unlikely, how uncontrollable, or how far-off it may seem, the Lord Jesus is coming, and all that He has promised will surely be fulfilled.
Write out James 5:7–12 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out James 5:7, 8. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE EXCEPTIONAL PATIENCE

Patience is an essential quality of a Christian, no matter who they are. Paul encourages the believers to “put on” patience, and he lists it as one of the fundamental fruits of the Spirit (Col. 3:12; Gal. 5:22).

In addition to the ordinary need, there are certain circumstances that require exceptional patience.

Patience when circumstances are out of your control. James uses the example of a farmer waiting for “the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). Arguably, there are very few things that a farmer can control about growing plants. Aside from tilling the soil and planting, there’s just a whole lot of waiting. The farmer cannot forcibly germinate his seeds any more than he can conjure rain from the clouds overhead. He can hope and pray and watch. But he cannot make it happen.

Patience sometimes looks very passive. It requires trust in someone or something else, and a stillness instead of a frantic grasping for control. Often the greatest discomfort in patience is that there isn’t more for the patient one can do other than be patient.

Patience when people will not change. The prophets of old are one of the best examples of persistent patience. Isaiah and Jeremiah (and Hosea and Amos and many others) are filled with God’s pleadings with an obstinate nation. Real life analogies, intricate stories and metaphors, and tearful pleadings by prophets often did nothing to move the hearts of His people. And still He sent more; and then, He sent His Son.

Patience sometimes looks devastatingly active. It requires doing what God has asked, even when the results are not materializing as hoped. It involves trying again and again in selfless service and persistence, out of love for someone other than self.

Patience when your experience is unexplainable. Job is a long-winded book that tells of a God-loving man’s confusing experience. Though readers are given the extra context of the conversations between the devil and God regarding Job, it still does not answer every question. Besides, it’s possible Job never even heard that part of his story, and he at least didn’t know it while he was going through the darkest chapters. Yet, he stayed faithful to God. He didn’t withhold his bitterest of questions and heartaches, but he refused to accept faulty theology from his friends, or the recommendation to curse God from his wife, or even the suggestion to be quiet.

Patience sometimes is painful. It’s the experience of waiting and not knowing why that tears at the heartstrings. Sometimes, answers come with relieving clarity later on; but sometimes they can only be hoped for at the time when God will provide all the answers. Believers need patience with God because He paints on a larger canvas than human sight can see.
WHAT NOT GRUMBLING CAN DO

While patience is essential, impatience can bring untold consequences. One of the greatest sins of the people of Israel, especially while traveling throughout the desert for forty years, was their complaining. Many times, their grumbling was rooted in impatience itself (Num. 21:4, ESV). They grumbled about a lack of water instead of asking God for some (Exod. 15:22–25); they idolized their meals from their past lives as slaves and claimed God wanted to kill them with hunger (even though they had plenty of food, just not what they wanted; Exodus 16); and, as soon as Moses was out of sight for longer than they expected, they decided a golden calf was a good idea to have as their focus of worship (Exodus 32). Using the Oxford Dictionary definition of patience, “able to accept or tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious,” the nation of Israel was a fantastic example of the opposite of it.

Israel’s recorded history helps the modern reader understand why James denounces grumbling so intensely. As he has emphasized several times, words are not just words; they are the expression of the condition of the heart. When words of impatience are expressed, it gives evidence of an impatient and untrusting heart. When grumbling and complaining words are used, the speaker shows their distrust in their loving Father.

From an experiential point of view, how does complaining help the situation? That is, not seeking out solutions, not brainstorming ways out, but pure, unadulterated complaining. Logic and the experience of many confirm that complaining serves best to fuel the fire of frustration, not diminish it. Instead of helping, then, it makes the situation worse by magnifying the problem. James adds that grumbling also brings condemnation to the speaker, thereby compounding the reasons to stay away from it.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul urges believers to “do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain” (Phil. 2:14–16). When God’s children abstain from complaining and fighting, there is a stark, supernatural difference about them. Their light shines in the world, and they glorify God.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Nehemiah 9:30
Romans 15:5, 6
2 Thessalonians 3:5
Habakkuk 2:3
Jude 1:16
2 Peter 4:9
Matthew 5:33–36

What other verses come to mind in connection with James 5:7–12?

Review your memorized verse from James 5:7–12.
THE PATIENT SAVIOR

James appeals to believers to be patient “until the coming of the Lord” (James 5:7). God Himself knows what it’s like to wait for something precious and longed for. Even before His incarnation, Jesus patiently led His people through the desert. (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 401). “Long-suffering” was personified in those forty years, and Jesus saw their lives in the Promised Land by faith even when they were unable to see it themselves.

Jesus was consistently and enduringly patient with His closest companions—His disciples. They assumed His wishes incorrectly by shooing away children that He wanted close by (Luke 18:15, 16); they rebuked Him for sharing the painful future that awaited Him (Mark 8:31, 32); they held vindictive views of people who did not welcome Jesus (Luke 9:54); and they continued to ask Him when He would restore Israel as a nation even after He was raised from the dead (Acts 1:6). For most of His earthly ministry, they seemed to be a half-step or more off where He was headed and what He was doing. Yet Jesus never “fired” a disciple. He didn't fiercely rebuke them out of anger, demote them, or give up on them. Instead, He patiently and repeatedly answered their questions, calmed their fears, and saw the fruit of their lives when they couldn’t even see it themselves (Luke 22:32).

This Jesus of the Gospels is the same Jesus who lives today. He extends the same lovingkindness and long-suffering to all of His children. He encourages generous forgiveness and forbearance with others, because He models this Himself. He patiently retraces the steps of a confused sheep that doesn’t know where it’s going and rescues it from danger only He can see. He steadfastly watches the road where a child walked away, waiting for a glimpse of their return. As soon as He sees their form on the horizon, He runs toward them, eager to embrace and restore.

Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross while His closest friends abandoned and denied Him, the leaders of His people hated and mocked Him, and His Father’s presence was withdrawn. (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, 759). He endured all these things without removing Himself from the situation and without complaint because of “the joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). He was looking toward the result. He was patient with His overwhelming circumstances, and by faith He saw His disciples emboldened, the leaders converted or proved wrong, and Himself seated “at the right hand of the throne of God” (v. 2). And that was enough for Him.
PRECIOUS FRUIT

The word of God often comes in collision with man's hereditary and cultivated traits of character and his habits of life. But the good-ground hearer, in receiving the word, accepts all its conditions and requirements. His habits, customs, and practices are brought into submission to God's word. In his view the commands of finite, erring man sink into insignificance beside the word of the infinite God. With the whole heart, with undivided purpose, he is seeking the life eternal, and at the cost of loss, persecution, or death itself, he will obey the truth.

And he brings forth fruit “with patience.” None who receive God's word are exempt from difficulty and trial; but when affliction comes, the true Christian does not become restless, distrustful, or despondent. Though we can not see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God's providences, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation.

Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness.

“The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.” James 5:7. So the Christian is to wait with patience for the fruition in his life of the word of God. Often when we pray for the graces of the Spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed. Yet none can develop these graces except through the process of growth and fruit bearing. Our part is to receive God’s word and to hold it fast, yielding ourselves fully to its control, and its purpose in us will be accomplished.

“If a man love Me,” Christ said, “he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John 14:23. The spell of a stronger, a perfect mind will be over us; for we have a living connection with the source of all-enduring strength. In our divine life we shall be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature. Thus shall we bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit—“some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.” (Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, 60, 61.)
inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

In your own words, what does “patience” mean practically?

Why do you think complaining is so acceptable in most circles? What are ways to change that in our lives?

What is your reaction to this section of this week’s inSight: “Often when we pray for the graces of the Spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed”?

Is the psalmic phrase “wait on the Lord” the same thing as having patience? Why or why not? Use Bible verses to further explain your thoughts.

What are different ways you need to express patience in the coming week? How can that be accomplished?