

### 1. Introduction

- a. The book of James is speaking to Christian foreigners “not at home” and experiencing suffering of various types
  - i. He doesn’t give the “why” of suffering (he counts it as normative in the Christian life, c.f. James 1:2)
  - ii. He’s not so much interested in the diagnosis of suffering (the why) but the prognosis (ok, what do I do now?)
- b. James is telling his readers to be patient and endure through suffering
  - i. How do you maintain patience through suffering?
  - ii. How do you reconcile God’s plan for your life through your suffering?
  - iii. What does the Easter holiday teach us about suffering?

### 2. The Evil of Suffering

- a. Suffering comes in many forms but it makes it mark through isolation, exclusion, loss, not being accepted—all the things James’ readers would most likely have been experiencing
- b. Interesting note: James warns against the “grumble” that comes with our suffering---suffering can lead us down a very bad path!
  - i. Suffering leads to a sort of corrosion--he says not to grumble. V. 9
  - ii. Why is grumbling so bad that it would merit “judgement” (v. 9) ??
    - 1. The problem with grumbling is that we become the grumble—we get wrapped up in our suffering and become self-seeking, destroying the fabric of community and relationships.
    - 2. He condemns grumbling because it's destructive to you because it makes you your own #1 priority.
    - 3. “A vote for hell is a vote for endless autobiography.” –C.S. Lewis
  - iii. Suffering brings about an endless autobiography—separation from God and our community

### 3. The Answer for Suffering

- a. James calls for patience, endurance in times of suffering (v. 8—makrothumias, v. 11—hupomenotos)
  - i. Stand fast—put the foot in the ground and remain even when it looks absurd to do so
  - ii. How do you do this? Seeing him who is slow to anger as James says. That will make you slow to anger with others and stand fast in suffering.
    - 1. He gives the prophets as examples
      - a. Isaiah—called to people who would never believe or even listen to his words (Isaiah 6:9)
      - b. Hosea—called to people who would never remain faithful (Hosea 1:2)
      - c. Jeremiah—called to people who would be taken captive by a foreign country and would count him as a traitor for speaking God’s word (Jeremiah 1:19,
      - d. Job (James 5: 11)—called to suffer for no apparent reason, invites the scorn of his friends and even his wife!
    - 2. *This* is putting your foot down for something in the face of suffering—and this is why we’re talking about them 2,000+ years later!!!
- b. But these are just examples--they won't change you to be a person who endures during suffering (though they may inspire you)
- c. James, instead, call us to be patient “therefore” in light of the coming of the Lord (v. 7)
  - i. You have to look at the ultimate example of patience in suffering of the one who is coming back—Jesus (Luke 9:22).
  - ii. How do we make sense of suffering? Because we have the only God who did suffer, died and ultimately lived!
- d. Ultimately, how do you know, as James says, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful? (v. 11)

- i. How was he compassionate and merciful? He sent his Son to suffer and die for you so that you know your sufferings are not only finite but ultimately will be used for greater glory
  - 1. When you see his suffering on your behalf and his resurrection on your behalf, you know that no amount of suffering here and now will destroy you
  - 2. When you see his suffering on your behalf and his resurrection on your behalf, you know that one day you will have a greater glory because of your suffering and not just despite your suffering
    - a. "Darkness must pass, a new day will come. And when the sun shines, it will shine out the clearer." –J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*
    - b. "The joy of your glory will be that much greater for every scar you bear. So live in the light of the resurrection and renewal of this world, and of yourself, in a glorious, never-ending, joyful dance of grace."-Timothy J. Keller