

Establish Your Hearts

James 5:7-8 (ESV) 7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

I. Intro

- A. The reminders and warnings continue with a reminder to be patient
- B. This is a reminder of our complete dependance on God, and also our responsibilities to serve as we wait.
- C. Remember, repeated words and phrases are vital to understanding a passages emphasis.
 - 1. We have been warned in recent verses of:
 - a) The godless practice of judging
 - b) The godless practice of self righteousness
 - c) The godless practice of planning your life void of God's plan
 - d) The godless practice of gaining wealth for the wrong reasons and with the wrong practices.
 - 2. Today we are hit with a "therefore" that guides the conclusion to be drawn from the warnings.
 - 3. Remember: context is the key to unlock the text

II. Text

- A. Last week we ended with a statement that draws us all into the responsibility of the death of Christ:
 - 1. [Jas 5:6 ESV] 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.
 - 2. We are all prone to handle things wrong, and we are all guilty of sin which put Jesus on the cross.
 - 3. So we must be reminded of our natural struggle, and the supernatural answer
- B. Verse 7
 - 1. Be Patient, therefore, brothers
 - 2. Until the coming of the Lord
 - 3. See how the farmer waits
 - 4. Be patient about it
 - 5. Until the early and late rains
- C. Verse 8
 - 1. You also, be patient
 - 2. ESTABLISH your hearts
 - 3. For the coming of the Lord is at hand

III. Points

- A. The Patient Farmer
 - 1. The divine imperative and divine indicative meet in the work of the farmer:
 - a) The farmer will grow no crops without planting the seed
 - (1) At the right time, In the right way
 - (2) With proper care, the crops will produce more
 - (3) With proper soil, the plant will have the best chance of survival.
 - b) The seed will not grow without the rains provided by God
 - (1) Only God can provide what is needed for the production of fruit
 - (2) The seed is designed by him
 - (3) The soil is designed by him
 - (4) The rain is designed by him
 - (5) The plant is designed by him
 - (6) The sun is designed by him

- c) This is really a complex operation that requires the farmer to put the seed in the ground, and tend it properly
 - d) And God grows the plant and produces the fruit.
- 2. A seed:
 - a) Cornell university: How Long Will Seeds Last? Many seeds will maintain great germination for three years even in your kitchen cupboard, though there are exceptions. Stored well, some seeds can last centuries.
 - b) A seed is packed with the genetic material that will become a fruit bearing plant
 - c) But can wait until the conditions are right in order to become what they should become.
 - d) A seed will not produce fruit unless it is planted, and will take the proper amount of time to be what it should be after planting.
- 3. When you plant, there are lots of moments yet to come where you wonder if its going to happen...be patient
- 4. In your spiritual life and ministry, also be patient
 - a) Do the work of the farmer now
 - b) Trust God to bring the rain
 - c) Also, the soil is cultivated and prepared for optimal production.
 - d) Devote yourself to the word, to service, and to the call to holiness
 - e) And serve while you wait
- 5. The farmer is not done after the planting, but continues to serve
- 6. We continue to serve as well, until the coming of our Lord.
- B. The Precious Fruit
 - 1. The Fruit comes from the Root
 - 2. The Fruit of the plant is amazing in so many ways!
 - a) A green plant that looks very similar to every other plant can produce fruit that is unique and diverse
 - b) The Fruit is by design, and brings life and joy
 - c) Nutrition and Blessing, a gift
 - 3. The fruit of our lives will be by God's design and will also bring joy as we serve to bring the gospel to the world.
 - 4. The precious fruit of the believer can be seen in the growth of faith and trust in the Lord
 - 5. This passage directs that to the return of Christ:
 - a) We serve as we wait patiently
 - b) We look forward to the fulfillment of the promise of Christ.
 - c) And we bear fruit where we are planted.
 - 6. We do not wait without a task, we wait with a purpose.
- C. The Established Heart
 - 1. Be determined in the purpose as you wait
 - 2. Find peace in the waiting as you grow in faith and service
 - 3. Because the return is "at hand":
 - a) Literally in the greek...is near
 - b) This word is used all over the new testament, and is always about proximity and nearness
 - c) Draw near to God, he will draw near to you: same words, similar meaning
 - d) We can see that the return of Christ is imminent, and we can recognize the writers of the Bible thought the same thing:
 - (1) John MacArthur article on Grace to You
 - (2) We are in good company to believe the return is imminent
 - (3) But we are also in good company to serve until he returns.
 - 4. The established heart is:
 - a) One that has security in Christ through salvation
 - b) Believes the return is a good thing

c) Trusts the Lord to continue using us as necessary until He returns

IV. Close

John MacArthur:

Christ could come at any moment. I believe that with all my heart—not because of what I read in the newspapers, but because of what I read in Scripture.

From the very earliest days of the church, the apostles and first-generation Christians nurtured an earnest expectation and fervent hope that Christ might suddenly return at any time to gather His church to heaven. James, writing what was probably the earliest of the New Testament epistles, expressly told his readers that the Lord's return was imminent:

Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:7–9, emphasis added).¹

Peter echoed that same expectation when he wrote, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers” (1 Peter 4:7). The writer of Hebrews cited the imminent return of Christ as a reason to remain faithful: “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25). He wrote, “Yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (v. 37). And the apostle John made the most confident pronouncement of all: “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18). When John recorded his vision in the book of Revelation, he prefaced it by saying these things “must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1).

The New Testament writers often wrote of Christ's “appearing,” and they never failed to convey the sense that this could happen imminently. “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28; cf. 3:2; Colossians 3:4; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4).

All those texts suggest that in the early church expectation of Christ's imminent return ran high. A solid conviction that Christ could return at any time permeates the whole NT.