

## PATIENCE DRIVES PERSEVERANCE!

**Today's Text:** James 5

### **Extracts:**

**Therefore 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. ...My brethren take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No" be "No," lest you fall into judgment [Jam. 5: 7-8, 10-12].**

In a popular album, *The Harder They Come* (1972), by the Jamaican Reggae superstar, Jimmy Cliff, the song I love the most is "You can get it if you really want." The lyrics (in part) are as follows: "You can get it if you really want... but you must try, try and try, try and try; you will succeed at last"<sup>1</sup> That suggests that success may not be at the first attempt or soon, and you need not give up just because the going is tough. You need *patience* (the ability to exercise restraint in trying situations)<sup>2</sup> and *perseverance* (the quality that allows you to continue trying to do something even though it is difficult).<sup>3</sup> Success depends on both of them, and patience drives perseverance.

Recent developments suggest that we are losing patience. For example, a recent CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) report suggests that the US suicide rate is at its highest in a half-century, and suicide is now the second-leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 35.<sup>4</sup> A WHO (World Health Organisation) suicide ranking showed that 800,000 people die globally every year, with 15.1 suicides per 100,000 people annually. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, now ranks the 30<sup>th</sup> most suicide-prone out of 183 nations in the world.<sup>5</sup> Why are we losing patience?

In today's study, James enjoins believers to endure and be persevering until the coming of the Lord; that we count them blessed who endure. How can we use patience to drive our perseverance? Let us find out.

<sup>1</sup> <https://genius.com/Jimmy-cliff-you-can-get-it-if-you-really-want-lyrics>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.speakingtree.in/blog/what-is-patience-672592>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/perseverance>

<sup>4</sup> <https://psmag.com/news/the-suicide-rate-is-at-its-highest-in-a-half-century>

<sup>5</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201806120062.html>

## 1. **Background: Success is unsafe at any speed!**

We are all familiar with the story of Job when God allowed Satan to tempt him to the point of losing all his property and ten children within a short time [**Job 1: 6-22**]. Satan also afflicted him with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. At that stage, his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!” But Job replied, “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” [**Job 2: 7-9**]. We are not told for how long Job suffered but he never gave up. In the end, God healed him and restored his wealth double fold, with seven sons and three daughters. He lived for another one hundred and forty years and saw his children’s children for four generations [**Job 42: 10-16**].

*The challenge that we face today is impatience.* The fight for dwindling resources and opportunities is breeding anxieties and depression. Suicide rates are rising, even where such was unheard of in the past. How can we face and deal with such challenges? That is where James’ epistle (Chapter 5) is helpful. Let us pay attention to the following points:

### 1) *Don’t be misled by worldly standards*

James wrote, “You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts, as in a day of slaughter” [**Jam. 5: 5**]. Having defined success by worldly standards, we pursue it also by worldly criteria. For example, the rich have enriched themselves by corrupt practices, such as withholding the wages of their workers; they live in luxury and condemn the just. The people we regard as successful swear by heaven or by earth but not by the truth [**vv. 2-5**].

When we see such people’s outward show of success, we want to imitate them. We steal, kill and destroy, taking advantage of the weak/inadequate institutional checks and balances. People in power prey on their subordinates for sexual pleasures and criminal collusion. Police let criminals go scot-free and customs officials take bribes to allow contraband goods into their countries. The operating rule is “Thou shalt not be caught!”

But James warns, “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!” [**v. 1**]. Sooner than later, your sin will bring you out [**Num. 32:23**]. Your records are no longer confidential when you have been removed! Imprisonment and confiscation of ill-gotten wealth hardly featured in your definition of success. Therefore, do not be misled by worldly standards.

### 2) *The end of life’s journey is the return of Christ*

James wrote, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand” [**Jam. 5: 7-8**]. Once you realise that your success on earth is measured by your admission into heaven on the day you die, your “Yes” will always be “Yes” and your “No,” “No” [v. 12]. Or how will you feel if Christ were to return today and find you in denial and falsehood? Therefore, success is defined and measured by God.

### 3) *Patience drives perseverance*

James writes, “Therefore, be patient until the coming of the Lord...Indeed, ***we count them blessed who endure***” [vv. 7,11]. That suggests that patience and endurance are related. ***When you focus on the long-term gains, you endure the short-term pains***. James reminded us of the perseverance of Job and the end intended by the Lord- “that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” [v. 11]. In the heat of his unrelenting pain, Job cried out, “I know my Redeemer lives and He shall stand at last on the earth” [**Job 19:25**] and “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” [**Job 13: 15**]. Job’s patience drove him to persevere.

Jimmy Cliff, quoted above<sup>6</sup>, sings:

***Persecution you must fear  
Win or lose you got to get your share  
You’ve got your mind set on a dream  
You can get it though hard it may seem now***

***Rome was not built in a day  
Opposition will come your way  
But the hotter the battle you see  
Is the sweeter the victory now***

From the forgoing, we can conclude that ***whatever we are pursuing in life, success is not easy and it is painful and unpredictable at any speed***. It is worse if it is not anchored on God’s plan and purpose. That is why we are stressed and depressed. So, what lessons can we learn for our own use? Let us find out in the next section.

## 2. Lessons for us

According to an African proverb, we all have eyes but not all of us can see. Even those who can see do not see the same thing when they look at the same object. Therefore, in order for us to cope with the challenges that we face during our sojourn on earth, it is advisable to let God supply all our needs according to His

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<sup>6</sup> <https://genius.com/Jimmy-cliff-you-can-get-it-if-you-really-want-lyrics>

riches in glory by Christ Jesus [**Rom. 8: 28**]. So, to enable patience to drive your perseverance, the following guidelines will be helpful:

1) *Let God choose your purpose*

The word of God says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths**” [**Prov. 3: 5-6**]. When God called the prophet Jeremiah, He told the young man, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; ... I ordained you a prophet to the nations” [**Jer. 1: 5**]. Therefore, you should let God choose your purpose.

Many of us are pursuing careers/goals chosen for us by parents, mentors or by those we regard as our role models. But is that what God has for you? Therefore, you should first seek God’s purpose for you on a matter before you pursue it. Otherwise, you may waste so much time and other resources with little or nothing to show for it. Peter was an established fisherman on the Lake of Gennesaret. However, his boats were idle for most times because there was no fish to catch. One day, Jesus asked to sit on his boat to preach to the multitude listening to Him on the shore. When He had stopped speaking, He told Peter to launch into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. Peter replied, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net.” When he did so, he caught so much fish that the net was breaking. He called his colleagues and they filled two boats. Peter fell down on his knees and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” Jesus replied, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.” When they had brought the boats to land, Peter forsook all and followed Jesus [**Lk 5: 1-11**]. That is how Peter the fisherman became the leading apostle of Christ and the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church!

How may you know God’s purpose for you? Ask Him! For example, when armies from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir surrounded Judah to attack it, Jehoshaphat sought the LORD by proclaiming a fast and assembling his people in the house of God in Jerusalem. He prayed for God’s guidance. There and then, the Spirit of God came upon a prophet among them who told King Jehoshaphat how to defeat the enemy [**2 Chron. 20: 1-115**].

Many people ask amiss for their self-aggrandizement instead of asking in faith [**Jam. 4:1-6**]. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Those who come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [**Heb. 12:6**]. Faith comes by hearing the word of God [**Rom. 10: 17**]. God speaks to us through visions, dreams and prophesy [**Joel 2: 28**], among others. So, if you walk by faith and not by sight [**2 Cor. 5: 7**], you are on course.

2) *Focus on that purpose*

What God has told you about your purpose may be in terms of final outcome/destination, not the road/route to take. For example, at the age of seventeen, Joseph was shown in dreams that he was going to be the star of his family [**Gen. 37: 1-11**]. He was not shown how it would happen. He did not become governor of Egypt until he was thirty years old, after slavery and much hardship [**Gen. 41:46**]. Along the way, he fought off temptations because he feared God [**Gen. 39: 6-13**].

Satan will tempt you with challenges of failure, to tell you that God never told you to do what you are doing or working for. However, as the word of God has assured, “Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” [**Is. 30:21**]. You must be able to differentiate between suffering due to growing pains (like a child losing front teeth to grow the permanent ones) and consequences of sin (due to disobedience). Stay the course no matter what.<sup>7</sup>

3) *Success is unsafe at any speed!*

There is no achievement record for you to set or to break because each of us has his/her race track to eternity as set by God. There will be delays, detours and obstacles. They are meant to strengthen your muscles and avoid obstacles on your route.

Look at what Paul passed through as he tried to fulfill God’s purpose for him to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. From the Jews, he received thirty-nine stripes five times; he was shipwrecked a night and a day in the deep. He was robbed by Jews and Gentiles, in the city and in the wilderness, among other trials and tribulations. Yet he was not discouraged [**2 Cor. 11: 22-33**]. In Paul’s word, he was not ashamed of the gospel to which he was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles, adding, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him *until that Day*” [**2 Tim. 1: 8-12**]. That is, to the Day of Christ’s return.

4) *All will ultimately be well*

James concludes his epistle with the following words, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any one cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him ... The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” [**Jam.5:13-16**]. All will ultimately be well.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume\\_10/Fearparalyzes.pdf](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_10/Fearparalyzes.pdf)

*In sum, if you are patient you will be able to persevere. You may be pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed [2 Cor. 4: 8-10].*

### 3. Conclusion: Heaven is your final destination!

A world with full pleasure/without pain can be boring! Take the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were made in the image and likeness of God. They did not lack anything. They were never sick and they were made to live forever. Nevertheless, they fell to Satan's temptation by eating the forbidden fruit. Instead of repenting, they did blame-shifting.<sup>8</sup> So, God threw them out of the garden of abundance [**Gen. 3:1-24**].

God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to come to the earth in human form to rescue Adam's descendants from sin and hardship and show them the way back home to heaven. Look at the pains that He had to bear. He was sentenced to die on the cross without any proof of guilt. In pains, He cried out, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" [**Lk 23: 34**]. He indeed died and was buried. He rose from the dead three days later. Before His departure from the earth, He told His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world*" [**Jn 16: 33**]. He is with us always, even to the end of the age [**Matt. 28: 20**].

What lesson do we learn from those two stories? It is that *our success on earth as believers is anchored on heaven's standards, not material things. Our ultimate destination is Heaven. Therefore, even though your struggles here on earth may be long and painful, your faith-built patience will sustain your perseverance to your point of final victory.*

Patience drives perseverance.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume\\_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf)