

## **Wisdom for a New Year**

*H O P E ~ James 5*

March 1 & 2, 2008

Hope is a belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life. Hope implies a certain amount of perseverance, believing that a positive outcome is possible even when there is some evidence to the contrary. (*Wikipedia*)

- Ultimately, what distinguishes "hope" is the object in which the hope is placed
- ***Don't envy sinners, but always continue to fear (respect) the Lord. You will be rewarded for this; your hope will not be disappointed.***

*Proverbs chapter 23 verses 17 & 18 (497)*

- ***We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. Psalm 33 verse 20 (428)***
- ***This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God...***

*1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 10 (911)*

***Be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.***

*James chapter 5 verses 7 & 8 (932)*

### Be patient

- Have "L - O - N - G" patience, don't give up
- Keep doing good, keep honoring God, keep doing the right thing, keep growing towards full-devotion in Christ
- I don't need patience when something is fun & easy. I only need patience when something is difficult, demanding & costly

### as you wait for the Lord's return

- Jesus' return means that justice will finally come to earth...
- that all wrongs will be made right
- that right-living will be vindicated & rewarded
- that our hope will finally be validated & realized!

### Consider the farmers who patiently wait

- Farmers don't accept what is
- They remove rocks & weeds & work the soil to make it productive & useful
- They constantly rework the soil & maintain the soil
- Farming is hard work. Farmers get dirty & sweaty

You, too, must be patient. Take courage...

- ***Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.***

*Matthew chapter 13 verse 9 (744)*

- ***Let's not get tired of doing what is good (literally: let's not get weak hearted!). At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.***

*Galatians chapter 6 verse 9 (894)*

- "Take courage" literally means that I set my heart in a fixed & absolute direction

### My Attitude

***Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look, the Judge is standing at the door! James chapter 5 verse 9 (932)***

- To grumble is to complain about someone behind their back
- When I grumble, I first pass judgment on someone, then I question their motives / character, THEN I voice my complaints about them
- When I do this, I have judged them...and God alone is the judge
- ***Don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time, before the Lord returns. For He will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due. 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 5 (872)***
- ***For the Kingdom of God (living a God-honoring life) is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power. 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 20 (872)***
- James doesn't forbid me from talking to others about obvious areas of sin they're struggling with
- REMEMBER...the only appropriate way to handle conflict with someone is to talk to that person immediately, face-to-face (see Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 18 verses 15 - 17)

### Character

***Never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned. James chapter 5 verse 12 (932)***

- Trickery in oath-taking was at epidemic levels in Jesus & James' day
- A person could cleverly "take an oath" that would allow them to break their promise & still be considered a person of integrity
- James & Jesus both speak out against this (see Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 5 verses 33-37)
- My word is to be dependable & trustworthy. I am to be a person of character when I promise something or say I will do something
- This does not literally forbid me from ever taking an oath. Instead, the Bible commands me to be a person of integrity, a keeper of my word

### More

- What am I putting my hope in? People? Wealth? Myself? God?
- What steps do I need to take in order to put my hope in God alone?
- What areas of my life is God asking me to be patient in? Where have I already given up, lost hope? What will I do to restore my hope in these areas?
- What qualities of farming or characteristics of the farmer is God asking me to build into my life? How will I do that?
- What area of doing good in my life have I given up on, lost hope in? God tells me not to give up because I will reap a harvest of blessing if I don't give up. What do I need to do to get back up in this area of my life & not lose hope? What other Christ-follower knows of my struggle and is encouraging & praying for me specifically in this area?
- What do I grumble most about? What will I do to honor God in this area?
- How good is my word? What are two steps I can take to get better in this area?

***Next week: It Came from Within (James 3:13 – 4:10)***