

# Pain in Heaven

Hang in There Part 4  
James 5:10-11 9-13-2015

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Summary: Our heroes are the prophets, because they persevered in faith through suffering for the name of the Lord. And we can be like our heroes. We have the faith; all we need is suffering! Job persevered (God delights in faith, failures notwithstanding). In the Job story we see that even though it did not seem like God had compassion, He was FULL of compassion and mercy. Let thoughts about God’s great compassion for you be what keep you going when you want to give up.

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**James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See, the farmer waits for the valuable crop of the land, being patient until he receives the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, so that you will not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful. 12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, so that you will not fall under judgment.**

## Introduction

### Perseverance

“Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying 'I will try again tomorrow.'”

That is a quotation from Mary Anne Radmacher. Theodore Roosevelt had a similar statement: “Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength.” Thomas Edison said this: “Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” And I like this one from Newt Gingrich: “Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.” People come up with some pretty clever sayings about perseverance. But when you are at the end of your rope, it takes a lot more than a clever quotation to keep going.

What is it that keeps certain people going after everyone else has given up? Some of it might be personality type – certain people are just naturally more tenacious than others. There are some people that will never give up even when they are barking up the wrong tree. God makes it crystal clear, “I haven't called you to do this,” and they still keep pressing ahead just because they are too proud to quit anything. But then there are other people who quit at the drop of a hat. The slightest resistance or hardship stops them in their tracks. Those are the people who are always quitting everything. “We're getting a divorce, I quit my job, I'm leaving the church, and I threw my phone in the lake – I'm done” - and they are just always bailing out of everything whenever the going gets rough.

## Review

James is writing to people who are in a situation where the going has gotten really rough. And he doesn't have any advice for them on how to escape their suffering or bring it to an end, he doesn't have any advice on how to get the people who are hurting them to stop, but he has a whole lot to say about how to persevere through the suffering. And to teach us how to persevere, he gives three examples: the farmer, the prophets, and Job. We discussed the farmer back in verse 7, and found that he was able to stay motivated even though it was a really long wait until payday because of how much he valued the crop, and how much he trusted in the faithfulness of God. The farmer can see that the delay itself is what is achieving the ultimate goal. Now the second example is in verse 10.

## The Prophets

### Be Inspired by Heroes of the Faith

**10 Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**

The word **example** means an example to be followed. James wants us to imitate them.

**Hebrews 6:12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.**

It is good to be inspired by great heroes of the past.

**Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**

Sometimes you know the right thing to do, but you can't seem to bring yourself to do it until you see someone else do it and that inspires you. Imagine a group of soldiers who are frozen in fear until they see their leader charge ahead into battle, and they gain courage and follow him. The capacity for courage was there; it just needed to be activated by an inspiring example. Sometimes you know certain biblical principles in a theoretical way, but you don't really understand how to put them into practice until you see it done. There have been times when I have seen Andrew deal with a really hard relational situation, or the Truong's showing hospitality, or Bob with tenacious love, and I realize, “Oh, that's what that biblical principle looks like in practice.” I did not really learn any new principle, but I did learn what that principle looks like in practice, and I was motivated to do it.

So who are our heroes? Actors are inspired by great actors, composers have Bach and Beethoven, philosophers have Aristotle and Plato – who do we have? The Prophets. And why them?

### **11 Behold, we consider blessed those who have persevered.**

Strong, unwavering, persevering faith is what inspires us, and so it is the prophets who are our heroes.

## **Perseverance and Patience**

You notice that James shifts from using the word *patience*<sup>1</sup> to the word *perseverance*.<sup>2</sup> Patience is a re-calibration of the clock of my expectations to synchronize with divine providence. Perseverance literally means *to remain under*. When the pressure comes and things get difficult, instead of getting discouraged and quitting, or getting upset and grumbling, instead of reverting to some sinful solution, instead of becoming double minded and wavering in faith, we stand firm in faith until God brings the trial to an end. And patience has a more relational emphasis. You are patient with people, and you persevere through circumstances. So when your kids are having a tough time waiting for some good thing to happen, instead of saying, “Be patient,” It would be a little closer to the biblical language if we said, “Persevere through this time of hardship until the thing you want happens.” But if our kids are arguing and fighting with each other, that is when we would use the word patience – “Be patient with your little brother.”

Patience means suffering a long time without getting mad. Perseverance means suffering a long time without giving up. And they are very closely connected, because sometimes giving up means getting mad. Giving up can mean, “I’m sick of this, and I’m tired of being Mr. Nice Guy about it,” and we start taking our frustration out on everyone around us. Perseverance and patience go hand in hand, because perseverance says, “I will continue on, and I will do so with a godly, Christ-honoring attitude showing love to those around me.” But that’s hard to do when you feel like you are at the end of your rope. Perseverance says, “I don’t feel like I can handle this one more hour. Everything in me wants to give up, but I *will not* deviate from the path of holiness.” That is perseverance.

## **The Greatest Superpower**

And the prophets are the model of that. And that is why they are our heroes. Some people are impressed with money, or with physical strength, or academic prowess, but what we are impressed with his faith. Someone who can keep on trusting God and remain obedient no matter how severe the suffering – that’s who we look up to. Have you ever walked out of a superhero movie and got into a conversation about if you could have one superpower, which one would you pick? If I could have one superpower it would be to have unshakable, unwavering trust in God. That superpower would enable you to do a lot more good for yourself and for everyone else than super strength or the ability to fly - or all of those imaginary superpowers put together. They are the people we really want to be like. And how can we become like them? How can you become like a person who is able to persevere through suffering?

## **Perseverance Requires Suffering**

It requires suffering, doesn’t it? You cannot become a war hero without going to war. You cannot be like the great basketball stars without actually playing basketball. And you can’t be like the great heroes of persevering faith unless you suffer. Some of our most inspiring heroes whose stories we love to tell and we teach them to our children are people who would have lived and died in obscurity and they would have meant nothing to us if God had not granted them intensive suffering. If Daniel had not suffered the total devastation of his homeland, then deportation as a teenager and being fed to hungry lions if he

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<sup>1</sup> Gr. *makrothumia*.

<sup>2</sup> Gr. *hupomeno*.

prayed to God, we never would have heard of him (Daniel 1:3-6). The only reason we know about his three friends was because they would rather be thrown into a furnace than bow down to an idol. All your favorite stories about David happened mostly during a time of intensive suffering when he was running for his life.

## **Attainable to Any of Us!**

Most people who have Michael Jordan as their hero will never attain to his level. No matter how hard I tried, I could never even come close to the level of Einstein or Pascal or Mozart or Napoleon or any of the greats in any field. But one of the really exciting things about the book of James is that James gives us access to becoming like the greatest heroes of all time. In chapter 2 he showed us how people like you and me can become like Abraham, the friend of God! We can be like Rahab. Later he will show us how we can have prayers that are just as powerful as Elijah's. We can be like Job. The feats of lesser heroes are far beyond what most of us could ever even dream of attaining, but God has placed within our reach the feats of the greatest men and women who have ever lived.

And the way to do it is to simply persevere in the most basic aspect of Christianity that there is – faith. The simplest, most bare bones requirement of becoming a Christian is faith. So if you are saved, you already have faith. The only thing that standing between you and true greatness is for that faith to continue through great suffering.

So do you see what James is doing? He is writing to a bunch of people who are suffering, and they are starting to become double-minded and waiver in their faith, and James is inspiring them by saying, “Look, suffering is not your enemy. It’s your ticket to being like the great heroes of the faith.”

## **Suffering Because of the Name**

And that is especially true when your suffering comes from your association with Christ.

**10 Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**

**In the name of the Lord** refers to their identification with the true God.<sup>3</sup> And that was the reason why the prophets suffered.

**Jeremiah 11:21 Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD or you will die by our hands.**

Jeremiah was banned from the Temple. He spent much of his life either in chains, or running for his life. He was unjustly accused of defecting to Babylon, and was thrown into a dungeon where he almost starved to death. Another time he faced starvation was when they put him down in a cistern.

**Jeremiah 38:6 ... They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.**

Life was not easy for the prophets. And it is amazing how often the New Testament refers to the persecution of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus talked about it in Matthew 5:11-12, and again in Luke 13:33. He told a parable about it in Matthew 21. He rebuked the people for it repeatedly in Matthew 23:31-37.

**Acts 7:52 Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?**

We read about the persecution of the prophets in Romans 11:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15, Revelation 16:6, Revelation 18:24.

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<sup>3</sup> See James 2:7.

**Hebrews 11:32 I do not have time to tell about ... the prophets, 33 who through faith ... 35 were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.**

That puts our suffering in perspective, doesn't it? Have any of us suffered like that? Raise your hand if you have ever been sawed in half.

"So the prophets were great because they suffered?"

No. Millions of people have suffered. What made them great was that they persevered in faith through their suffering. They remained faithful to death. Someone said the definition of a hero is just someone who hangs in there 10 minutes longer than everyone else. Perseverance is what enables you to keep going when you are stretched the limit, you feel like you are right there at the breaking point, and everything in you wants to give up, but you keep going. Your legs are screaming in pain, muscles burning, but you say, "I don't know how I'm going to make it through next month or next week or tomorrow or even the rest of this day, but for right now, I'll take one more step."

You might have heard the story of the can of cream:

Two frogs fell into a can of cream, or so I've heard it told;  
The sides of the can were shiny and steep, the cream was deep and cold;  
"Oh what's the use?" croaked number 1, "Tis fate, no help's around.  
Goodbye my friends, goodbye sad world." and weeping still he drowned.

But in number 2, of sterner stuff, dog paddled in surprise,  
The while he wiped his creamy face and dried his creamy eyes.  
"I'll swim awhile at least" he said-or so I've heard he said  
"It really wouldn't help the world if one more frog were dead."  
An hour or two he kicked and swam, not once he stopped to mutter  
but kicked and kicked and swam and kicked, then ... hopped out via butter!

He paddled around so much that he churned that cream into butter. Maybe the image of that little cream-faced frog paddling and kicking and hanging in there just a little longer than his friend did, refusing to give up and then being just fine at the end – maybe having that picture in your mind will help you remember the principle from James 5 about the blessedness of those who persevere all the way to the end. Spurgeon: "It was by perseverance that the snail reached the ark."

So now we have seen the patience of the farmer and the perseverance of the prophets. Now James gives us one more example in verse 11 – the perseverance of Job.

## **Job**

**11 ...You have heard of Job's perseverance**

### **Perseverance**

Now, if you have read the book of Job you know that his perseverance was less than perfect. He complains and curses the day of his birth and even questions the justice of God. It even got to the point where God stepped in and harshly rebuked Job. But even though his perseverance wasn't perfect, it was still perseverance. Through all the horrific suffering and loss and pain, he remained unswervingly loyal to God. When all those horrors first happen to him, this was his immediate reaction:

**Job 1:21 Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."**

When his wife lost hope and told him to give up, he said this:

**Job 2:10 You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?**

**Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him**

**Job 16:19 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. 20 My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; 21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.**

**Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**

There were moments when Job foolishly questioned God's justice or goodness, and he was rebuked for that. But even in those times, he never became angry at God or embittered toward God. He never stopped looking to God as the only solution to his problem.

## **God Looks Past Our Weaknesses**

And as a result, Job goes down in history as a supreme example of perseverance and suffering. I love it that there is no asterisk. I love that James does not put in a footnote saying, "Of course, Job did fail in this way and in this way, and he stumbled in certain aspects of patience..." No mention of that at all. It is just like back in chapter 2 when he used Abraham as an example of faith. Abraham faltered in his faith. He slept with Hagar because he didn't trust God to fulfill the promise through his own wife. He lied about Sarah twice because he didn't trust God to protect him. And yet, because of the faith he showed in being willing to give up his son, God holds him up as an example of great faith. God will deal with us for our lapses in faith, but those do not cancel out moments when we do show faith. Just as you can't cancel out your sins with good deeds, so you can't cancel out good deeds with sins - God keeps them separate. Manton: "Where the bent of the heart is right, the infirmities of God's people are not mentioned. Where God sees grace, he hides his eyes, as it were, from those circumstances that might seem to deface the glory of it. So in what Sarah says, though the whole sentence is full of distrust and unbelief, God takes notice of her reverence to her husband; she called Abraham "master" (1 Peter 3:6)." Some of you think that all that God sees when he looks at you is your failures. And in reality, God is taking delight in the graces that are present in your life.

## **God's Compassion and Mercy**

God is gracious, isn't He? And that is the conclusion that James draws from the account of Job.

**11 ...You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful.**

## **God Is the Main Character**

One of the biggest mistakes we make in Bible stories is thinking that the main character of the story is the human character. The main character in the story about Daniel in the lion's den is not Daniel, it is God. The main character in the Sampson story is God. And the main character in the book of Job is not Job, it is God. It is good to be inspired by the heroes of faith, but the most inspiring thing of all is seeing what God is like when we read those accounts.

## **The Purposes of God**

**11 ...You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about**

Your Bible might say **the purpose of the Lord**. It could be translated either way. Literally it says, **You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen the end of the Lord...** And that word **end** can refer to the end of the story, or it can mean purpose. And there is not a lot of difference between the two, because the purpose comes to fruition in the end. We have seen the purpose of the Lord with Job. Job did not get to see God's purpose. At the beginning of the book, we are told why God sent all that suffering, but Job never gets that information. Even at the end of the book when the suffering is over and God speaks to Job, He never does tell Job why it happened. But we do get to see God's purpose, and we also get to see how the story ends. God restores everything that Job lost, and blesses him twice as much as he was blessed to begin with, which was a lot. And he honors Job in a great way by telling those three friends, "I will only forgive you if Job prays for you." So we see at the end that all through the book, God could not wait to pile all kinds of rewards and blessings on Job just as soon as the purpose of the trial was accomplished.

You can see that by reading the end of the book, but you would never be able to see it from observation. If you were just an observer watching Job suffer, you wouldn't be able to see the purposes of God. James says that God is full of compassion and mercy - but if you are just standing there observing what happened to Job, would you be able to see any compassion and mercy? It exists, but it is not made visible until the end. The reason Job doubted God's mercy was because he was operating by his feelings rather than faith. That is why God rebuked him.

### **Job 38:2 Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?**

It is such folly to conclude that God is angry or that God doesn't care or that God's heart is calloused toward you during suffering just because it feels that way. It felt to Job like God was ruthless (Job 30:21). But in the end you find out that **the Lord is full of compassion and mercy**. The reason Job had such a good end to his troubles was not because he deserved it. He didn't. It had a good ending only because of God's mercy.

Notice the phrase **full of compassion**. Your Bible might say **very compassionate**. The normal word for compassionate is *splagchnos*. The word here is *poly-splagchnos*. The word *poly* intensifies it. So it means the Lord is really, really compassionate. (James might have made that word up because this is the only place it is found.) Whenever you see God's mercy referred to there is almost always a modifier like "much" or "great" or "tender." God is so merciful.

That word *splagchnos* literally means "entrails" - that place in your gut where you physically feel compassion. If you just have a little bit of compassion for someone, you don't feel it physically. But if you see someone hurt in a really extreme way, there are acids that are secreted that irritate the linings of your intestines so that you actually feel physical pain. That is what this word is referring to.

It is amusing to watch the tap dance that evolutionists do to try and explain why our bodies do that. It makes no sense in a survival of the fittest model. But it makes perfect sense if human beings are created in the image of a compassionate God. If you see someone suffer and it causes pain in your midsection, that pain is simply the stamp of the nature of God on your body. God designed our bodies like that to teach us what it is like for Him when He sees His children suffer.

### **Lamentations 3:32 Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. 33 For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.**

Does God bring grief into your life? Yes, but not willingly. When it is time for suffering to come into your life, it is God who does it, but He has to force Himself to do it. It is like when your child really, really wants something, and you really, really want to give it to him, but you know it's not best for him so you have to say *no*. Love forces you to say *no* even though you want to say *yes*. That is what it means when it says He doesn't do it willingly. God does not want to bring grief into your life, He hates seeing you suffer, but He forces Himself to do it anyway because He knows it is ultimately what is best for you. It literally, quite literally, hurts Him more than it hurts you, because He loves you even more than you love you.

## How Compassion Helps

So how does all that help you? If you are suffering, what good does it do you if God feels sorry for you? How many of you have seen a little child come running in the house crying, “Mommy, I got hurt!” and she says, “Aww, let me see,” and she kisses his little injury, and he stops crying and runs back out to play? The pain of the wound is bearable to him as long as he doesn’t have to bear it without his mother’s kiss of compassion. As long as he knows that she has seen his scrape and is aware of how much it hurts and feels for him, he is strong and can bear the suffering. How does that work? Is that just a child being irrational? If so, then why do we still do it as adults? Something really painful happens, and you mention it to your wife, your husband, your friends – you might post it on Facebook. And it is not enough for us to just say what happened. We are careful to make sure they know how much it hurt. Why do we do that? Is it somehow therapeutic to talk about it? No, that’s not it. We know that because if the person is your enemy and he is glad to see you suffer, you don’t want to tell him about how much you are suffering. You only want to tell people who will sympathize. You might have outgrown the practice of running to your mom and having her kiss your skinned elbow. But none of us have outgrown the deep craving we have for sympathy.

You have heard that saying, “a joy shared is a double joy, and the burden shared is half a burden.” That is really true. If someone else is happy because you are happy, that makes you even happier. And if someone else is sad because you are sad, that reduces the pain. If you and the person who is suffering love each other, then their compassion and empathy really can reduce your suffering. That is why Satan is always trying to talk you into suffering alone.

So there is nothing childish about wanting someone to feel sorry for you, because compassion is an expression of love. That is why compassion from others feels good, because it feels good to be loved. So there is nothing wrong with desiring that.

But here is the thing – you can tell whose love you care about most by whose compassion you desire most. I don’t really care if some random guy in the street feels sorry for me, but I want my wife to feel sorry for me if I’m suffering, because I care more about being loved by my wife than I do about some random stranger. I value and treasure her love more than I value someone else’s love, and that’s why her compassion means more to me than someone else’s compassion. So what does it say if God’s compassion means nothing to me? If I read in the Bible that God’s compassion for me is great, and that has no emotional impact on me, there are only three possibilities I can think of: either I don’t believe it’s true, or I don’t love God enough for His compassion to matter to me, or I do believe it’s true, and His compassion does matter to me, but I just don’t think about it enough or have enough awareness of it for it to have an impact on my emotions. Oh, how different our lives would be if we spent just five minutes per day more than we already spend thinking about what God is like!

When you are trying something, and you thought it might fail, but it succeeds, instead of just saying, “Thank you, God,” how about stopping for a moment and considering the possibility that God looked down at you, saw you struggling, was moved with compassion because of His love for you, and granted that good outcome because of His compassion? Read the Psalms and you will see that is the way the psalmists thought. If your paycheck is a little more than you expected, or dinner tastes better than usual, or you get a really good deal on something you buy, or you are finally able to figure out a problem that has been bugging you, or someone who hurt you finally apologizes - connect the dots with God’s compassion.

“God looked down, saw me struggling, and had compassion.”

What if you resolved to spend just five more minutes a day thinking about what God is like? When you read your Bible and you run across these direct statements about the nature of God, stop and savor them. Think about the implications. If it says the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, stop and apply that to some hard situations in the last 24 hours, and some things you anticipate happening later today. When you look at your credit card statement and you see the size of the debt, and you have all these feelings of guilt and fear and worry and regret, and anxiety about how you are ever going to get out of this hole you’re in, God is looking at you at that moment, and He knows the exact combination of feelings

that are racking your soul, and it racks His soul. When you look in the mirror and what you see makes you feel like a total failure, makes you feel ugly or worthless - God is right there next to you and He can feel everything you are feeling. And it hurts Him deep in His stomach (as it were) when He sees that you are hurting in that way. When your wife talks to you like you're a child, or your husband treats you like a piece of furniture, and you have that sinking feeling of despair and hopelessness because it is probably never going to change, there is pain in heaven, in the heart of God as He sits there and looks down and sees His precious child in despair.

## **God Will Act**

And if God feels that way, what do you think He is going to do? We know that eventually He will bring an end to your suffering, but we don't know if it is the right time just yet. So what is He going to do in the meantime - while this trial is running its course and accomplishing its purpose? Do you think He might do for you what He did for Paul in 2 Corinthians 12? Paul said, "Take this thorn away!" and God said, "I can't take it away yet because that wouldn't be what's best for you, but here's what I'll do instead: I will give you extra grace." Do you think God will do that for you - given the fact that His heart is racked with pain because of His compassion for you? Do you think the God of all comfort, if He feels that much compassion for you, will supply you with deep, soothing comfort and peace in your heart if you draw near to Him? Do you think He will listen to your prayers? And if there is any possible way He can fit what you are asking for into His perfect plan, don't you think He'll do it? Don't you think He will have so much eagerness to answer your prayers, that if it turns out the answer is no, there must be a really, really good reason?

If you are wondering how God feels about you, think about how you feel when your children are suffering. If you saw your child get hit by a car would that have any emotional impact on you?

**Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him**

In fact, God's compassion is even greater than the compassion of a human father or mother.

**Isaiah 49:15 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! 16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands**

It is better to have God's compassion than anyone else's. No one in this world is going to feel sorry for you because you had to get out of bed this morning. But there are some mornings when getting out of bed is incredibly hard for you, and no one knows how hard except God. And He has compassion - when no one else does.

Did you know that God feels compassion for us even when we sin against Him?

**Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.**

After we sin, we don't go to God and say, "God, even though You can't stand me right now, would You please forgive me?" Maybe that is how it is with your spouse sometimes, but that's not how it is with God. God actually feels sorry for you because you are in the horrible position of being at odds with Him. He feels sorry for you because you are on the receiving end of His discipline. He feels sorry for you because He can see the damage you have done to yourself with your sin, even if you can't see it. So we go to Him and say, "God, because of Your amazing compassion that You feel for me right now, will You please forgive me?" And God is not reluctant about it - He cannot wait to show you compassion when you are suffering.

**Isaiah 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. ... Blessed are all who wait for him!**

When you are suffering or going through some hardship, God is on the edge of His seat, chomping at the bit to show you compassion. What He feels in His heart is, “I can’t wait for the moment when I can bring relief. Right now isn’t the right time, it wouldn’t be what’s best for My dear child, but the split-second I can show compassion without destroying the good purpose of the trial, I’m going to!

## **Greater than His Anger**

When a human being feels both anger and compassion, the anger is going to win. Anger will almost always push compassion right out of your heart. And it is the same way with God when it comes to unbelievers. But with His children, it works the other way.

**Hosea 11:7 My people are determined to turn from me. ... 8 “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ...My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. 9 I will not carry out my fierce anger... For I am God, and not man**

Time and time again in the Old Testament you see God pour out his anger on His people and then, He sees their anguish and has compassion on them, and He cuts His discipline short and gives them blessing instead.

**Isaiah 54:7 For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.**

**Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. 19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.**

## **Gives Life**

If you ever really feel God’s compassion, it feels so good that it is worth the suffering just to feel it.

**Psalms 119:76 May your unfailing love be my comfort ...77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live**

Feeling the love and compassion of God gives us life. It gives you vitality and health and strength. It brings your disordered soul into order and chases away the darkness from the horizons of your life. When the heartache is just too much for you to handle, and you feel like you can’t make it another day – you have lost your will to keep paddling in the bucket of cream, all your muscles are cramped and you are overwhelmed with fatigue and discouragement and you want to give up – at that moment, remember His compassion. Let that be the thing that enables you to put one foot in front of the other one more time. To make it through one more day without giving up. Because His compassions are new every morning, great is His faithfulness. Blessed are those who wait for Him.

**Benediction: Exodus 34:5 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and ... proclaimed his name, the LORD. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.**

## **Application Questions (James 1:25)**

- 1) We are called to both fear God's chastisement, and to delight in God's love and compassion. Which do you find more difficult?
- 2) What situation (past or present) is your "can of cream" that makes it seem like you can't keep going, or tempts you to quit or to revert to a sinful "solution"?
- 3) Name the top two or three saints in the Bible whose example you find most inspiring. How about outside of the Bible? How about at Agape?