

WOULD RETURN. WE CAN COUNT ON IT: OUR LORD WILL RETURN, AND JESUS ALSO SAID THAT NO ONE EXCEPT THE FATHER KNEW WHEN THAT WOULD BE.

WHEN HIS DISCIPLES PRESSED JESUS FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHEN HE WOULD RETURN, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THAT WASN'T FOR THEM TO KNOW. THEIR TASK, AND OURS, IS TO WORK AND LIVE AND WITNESS TO THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST. AND HE FURTHER REASSURED

THEM, AND US, THAT HE WOULD BE WITH US IN THE PERSON AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. We can pack up our troubles, because we know that the uncertain future HOLDS A CERTAIN HOPE.

JESUS SEEMS NOT SO MUCH TO BE EMPHASIZING THAT HIS SECOND COMING IS GOING TO BE SOON AS THAT IT IS GOING TO BE SUDDEN. AGAIN AND AGAIN, HE URGED THOSE WHO HEARD HIM TO BE READY FOR HIS UNEXPECTED RETURN.

INTERESTINGLY, IN THIS PASSAGE, JAMES IS NOT TRYING TO SHOCK US OR SCARE US WITH THE FACT THAT THE LORD IS GOING TO RETURN SOON. RATHER, HE IS COUNSELING US TO BE PATIENT UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD.

HE USES A FAMILIAR IMAGE-THE FARMER WAITING PATIENTLY, KNOWING THAT THE RAINS WILL COME-TODAY, TOMORROW, NEXT WEEK-THEY WILL COME. AND WHEN THE RAINS COME, THE FRUIT WILL GROW, AND THE HARVEST WILL BE SURE.

JAMES SOUNDS THIS NOTE OF PATIENCE AGAIN IN VERSES 10 AND 11, HOLDING UP THE PROPHETS AS AN EXAMPLE. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONS JOB. AS WILLIAM BARCLAY NOTES IN THE DAILY STUDY BIBLE:

WE GENERALLY SPEAK OF THE PATIENCE OF JOB, AND THAT INDEED IS THE WORD WHICH THE AUTHORIZED VERSION USES. BUT PATIENCE IS FAR TOO PASSIVE A WORD. THERE IS THE SENSE IN WHICH JOB WAS ANYTHING BUT PATIENT. AS WE READ THE TREMENDOUS DRAMA OF HIS LIFE, WE SEE HIM PASSIONATELY RESENTING WHAT HAS COME UPON HIM,

~~PASSIONATELY RESENTING WHEN HIS CON- UPON HIM,~~
 PASSIONATELY QUESTIONING THE CONVENTIONAL AND
 ORTHODOX ARGUMENTS OF HIS SO-CALLED FRIENDS,
 PASSIONATELY AGONIZING OVER THE TERRIBLE THOUGHT
 THAT GOD MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN AND FORSAKEN HIM. THERE
 ARE FEW MEN WHO HAVE SPOKEN SUCH PASSIONATE WORDS
 AS JOB SPOKE. BUT THE GREAT FACT ABOUT JOB IS THAT
 IN SPITE OF ALL HIS TORRENT OF QUESTIONINGS, ~~AND IN~~
~~SPITE OF THE AGONIZING QUESTIONINGS,~~ AND IN SPITE OF
 THE AGONIZING QUESTIONINGS WHICH TORE AT HIS HEART,
 HE NEVER LOST HIS FAITH IN GOD..!"

THE WORD USED OF HIM IS THAT GREAT NEW TESTAMENT WORD
 HUPOMENE, THE WORD WHICH DESCRIBES, NOT A PASSIVE
 PATIENCE, BUT THAT GALLANT SPIRIT WHICH CAN BREAST
 THE TIDES OF DOUBT AND SORROW AND DISASTER, AND STILL
 HOLD ON, AND COME OUT WITH FAITH STILL STRONGER ON THE
 OTHER SIDE.

THAT'S WHAT JAMES IS TALKING ABOUT: THE CONFIDENCE
 THAT THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE HAS A CERTAIN HOPE.

HERE IT IS IN THE TESTIMONY OF ONE WHO LEARNED IT
 LATE-BUT LEARNED IT NONETHELESS, MICHAEL SCHAFFER-
 NOCKER, FROM ARLINGTON, TEXAS, A HELICOPTOR DOOR
 GUNNER IN VIETNAM, MET GOD FOR THE FIRST TIME AS HE
 PREPARED FOR BATTLE:

LOOK, GOD, I HAVE NEVER SPOKEN TO YOU, BUT NOW I
 WANT TO SAY, "HOW DO YOU DO."
 YOU SEE, GOD, THEY TOLD ME YOU DIDN'T EXIST.
 AND LIKE A FOOL, I BELIEVED ALL THIS.

LAST NIGHT FROM A SHELL HOLE I SAW YOUR SKY.
 I FIGURED RIGHT THEN THEY HAD TOLD ME A LIE.
 HAD I TAKEN TIME TO SEE THE THINGS YOU MADE,
 I'D HAVE KNOWN THEY WERE CALLING A SPADE A SPADE.

I WONDER, GOD, IF YOU'D TAKE MY HAND.
 SOMEHOW, I FEEL YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.
 FUNNY, I HAD TO COME TO THIS HELLISH PLACE
 BEFORE I HAD TIME TO SEE YOUR FACE.

WELL, I GUESS THERE ISN'T MUCH MORE TO SAY.
 BUT I'M SURE GLAD, GOD, I MET YOU TODAY.
 I GUESS THE ZERO HOUR WILL SOON BE HERE,
 BUT I'M NOT AFRAID SINCE I KNOW YOU ARE NEAR.

THE SIGNAL-WELL, GOD, I'LL HAVE TO GO.
 I LIKE YOU LOTS AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW.
 LOOK NOW, THIS WILL BE A HORRIBLE FIGHT
 WHO KNOWS, I MAY COME TO YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT.

THOUGH I WASN'T FRIENDLY TO YOU BEFORE,
 I WONDER, GOD, IF YOU'D WAIT AT THE DOOR.
 LOOK, I'M CRYING. ME, SHEDDING TEARS!
 I WISH I'D HAVE KNOWN YOU THESE MANY YEARS.

WELL, GOD, I'LL HAVE TO GO NOW, GOOD-BYE;
 STRANGE, SINCE I MET YOU... I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE!

NOT GOOD POETRY, SOME WOULD SAY, BUT IT'S A
 A POWERFUL WITNESS TO THREE TRUTHS:

- ONE - DON'T LET YESTERDAY ROB YOU OF TOMORROW.
- TWO - TEND TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS NOW - THAT IS,
 LIVE TODAY AS THOUGH IT WERE YOU LAST.
- THREE - KNOW THAT THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE HAS A CERTAIN
 HOPE FOR THE CHRISTIAN.