

James 5:10-11

v10-11, What is the Christian way to find the path forward in painful and difficult circumstances? Or more specifically, what is the source of illumination, of light, in dark places and periods in our lives as Christians, so that we do not stumble so as to fall and lose hope and fall into complete despair at our difficulties and situation? Does the Bible give us concrete answers to these questions that actually work out in real life?

Here in his book, James, the brother of our Lord, encourages us to lay hold of and lift up a lamp in our own darkness. James gives us two examples in the lives of Old Testament saints, who found the source of illumination for their lives and lifted it up for themselves and others to light the path of difficulty:

1. **The prophets**, who spoke in the name of the Lord. Their sufferings were in various ways, but the special path laid out for them required *patience* in the midst of suffering inflicted on them because of their calling.
2. **Job**, (who was the special assignment of Satan at the call of God), suffered especially simply because he was faithful, devout and godly in his walk and life in his time. That special path for him was simply to endure, *you have heard of the endurance of Job*. And for his endurance, he goes down in history as among those, “We count blessed who endured.”

Ok, so those were the particular life-paths through darkness each of those were called by the sovereign Lord to walk upon. But that doesn't yet answer the question of, *what was the light they found and held up to illumine and to stay on the path and not fall off to the left or right?*

The source of illumination and light:

It's found at the end of v11, and it comes in two connected elements: *and you have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.*

This two-element torch (the outcome of Lord's dealings/the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful) is the illumination to be held up in times of darkness and difficulty.

This leads to a question: What did the prophets and Job see as the outcome of the Lord's dealings so as to conclude that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy?

The prophets: With the OT prophets there were two aspects of the Lord's compassion and mercy that they observed and rejoiced in:

1. They saw with their own eyes, within the scope of their ministry, the Lord's compassion and mercy. Elijah saw the rains return to the land after a long and terrible drought. Jonah saw Nineveh repent and the city spared from judgment. Elisha saw the raising from the dead of the little son of the Shunammite woman. Daniel experienced delivery from the lions' den. If you think on it for a minute you'll come up with many more examples.
2. They saw with their prophetic eyes, the eschatological fulfillment of things in the distant future. Some foresaw the coming of the Messiah and his bearing away sins in his first coming (consider Isaiah). Some saw the coming of the Messiah in His second coming in great glory and judgment and His establishment of the millennial kingdom. Some saw both comings. Some beheld the glory of the millennial kingdom and the spiritual and physical blessing for both believing Jew and Gentile in that place. Daniel saw the broad sweep of gentile history as it relates to Israel and the first and the second comings of Messiah.

Job: With Job there were two aspects of the Lord's compassion and mercy that he observed and rejoiced in:

1. He saw and enjoyed the immediate blessing of the Lord when, upon enduring patiently, the Lord restored everything to him that he'd lost and much, much more. Family, wealth, and abundance.
2. But like the prophets, Job also foresaw and anticipated the resurrection, the glory of the ruling and reigning Christ in the first glimpse of the millennial kingdom: Job 19:25-27.

Our Lord Jesus, our Savior and Friend, is full of compassion and mercy. Consider these examples of him being moved by the immediate needs of people:

Mark 14:14, Matt 15:32, 20:34, Mark 6:34.

And for us: Phil 4:19

And we experience the compassion of the Lord when we are looking into the future with hope and anticipation of our rapture to be with Him in glory! Titus 2:13, 1 Thess 4:16-18

So let us hold up our lamps, relying on the compassion and mercy of the Lord for us, to illumine the darkness of our problems and difficulties. We are in the hands of our good Sovereign, who loves us and send His Son and His Spirit to love and secure our present and our future.

Let's close with this: 2 Peter 1:13-19 – Amen and Amen!