

James 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Analysis

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James exhorts believers to let endurance have her perfect work—the adjective *teleion* (τέλειον) means mature or complete, not sinless perfection. The command "let" (echētō, ἔχέτω) stresses submission: do not abort the sanctifying process prematurely. When *hypomonē* runs its full course, believers become "entire" (holoklēroi, ὅλοκληροι), a term used for unblemished sacrifices, highlighting the priestly calling of the church.

The phrase "wanting nothing" translates *leipomenoi* (λειπόμενοι), a participle echoing verse 5's "lack wisdom"; James is weaving a thematic thread that true wholeness is relational and moral, not material prosperity. Reformed theology insists that such completeness is the fruit of union with Christ; perseverance is evidence of God's preserving grace, not human grit.

By tying patience to maturity, James dismantles shallow definitions of blessing. Spiritual wholeness is displayed when believers respond to opposition with meekness, generous mercy and obedient action—a preview of the new creation formed in Christ's likeness.

Historical Context

For scattered Jewish Christians, the desire to escape tribulation by returning to old synagogue patterns or compromising with the world was strong. James, writing as

Jerusalem's respected elder, insists that exile is the furnace where covenant maturity is forged. His message complements Paul's pastoral letters that call churches to steadfastness while awaiting Christ's return.

The early 40s and 50s AD were marked by famine (Acts 11:27-30) and political unrest under Herod Agrippa I. Communities receiving this letter needed reassurance that perseverance was not wasted; James's insistence on completeness resonated with believers tempted to judge success by immediate relief.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What circumstances tempt you to abandon the refining work of endurance?
2. How might patience in this season lead to greater wholeness in service or relationships?
3. Which practices keep you surrendered while God finishes His sanctifying purpose?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	δὲ	ὑπομονὴ	ἔργον	τέλειοι	ἔχέτω	ἴνα	ἵτε
G3588	But	patience	work	her perfect	have	that	ye may be
G1161		G5281	G2041	G5046	G2192	G2443	G5600
τέλειοι	καὶ	όλόκληροι	ἐν	μηδενὶ	λειπόμενοι		
her perfect	and	entire	nothing	G3367	wanting		
G5046	G2532	G3648	G1722		G3007		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 5:48 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Luke 21:19 (Parallel theme): In your patience possess ye your souls.

1 Peter 5:10 (Parallel theme): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

2 Timothy 3:17 (Parallel theme): That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Habakkuk 2:3 (Parallel theme): For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Hebrews 13:21 (Parallel theme): Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 6:9 (Parallel theme): And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Psalms 37:7 (Parallel theme): Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Psalms 40:1 (Parallel theme): I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

James 3:2 (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.