

16. Once the farmer breaks the soil and sows the seeds he is then at the mercy of the grace of God. If the crop comes in it will be because of the grace of God. In the meantime, he must patiently wait.
17. During this time, he patiently waits for the early and late rains. This situation demonstrates the importance of a grace-oriented believer's mental attitude who is at the mercy of the weather. Here is the circumstance that is typical for any farmer in the area of Palestine:

Most important to the farmer is the distribution of rainfall throughout the year. This is very uneven indeed. No rain falls at all during the four hottest months of the year. This hot, dry summer is a common feature of most of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean; it is balanced by a cool wet winter, but the two critical periods are the beginning and end of the wet season, when temperatures are high enough to promote growth, and the soil is moist enough to work.

The farmer's year is linked closely to the coming of the rains. In October these begin, generally with a series of thunderstorms, and plowing and sowing can then be started on the hard-baked soil. If the start of the rainy season is delayed, crop yields suffer; if the delay a long one, crop failure may result. Hence, these "early" rains are of the utmost importance. At the other end of the winter, rains continuing into late April and May, when temperatures are high, are of much more value than in January or February, when they are low; they increase yields for every day that the rains are prolonged. The farmer therefore hopes for the "latter rains."

This combination of early and latter rains is referred to frequently in the Bible, e.g. Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; James 5:7.⁴

⁴ J. H. Patterson, "Rain," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1976), 27–28.



18. The most effective things this farmer can do is depend on the grace of God and His provision of those early and late rains.
19. Faith-rest is the function of systematic grace orientation. The believer is not a prophet. He can only do what he has learned through work, common sense, and trust in divine provisions.
20. He cannot control the weather. But he has learned that the weather patterns in Palestine commonly supply the early and late rains. His duty is to trust the system and be patient while it goes through its process.
21. On occasion the general weather patterns may alter and these early and late rains do not occur. This is why in the time of abundant harvests he is to store a portion for times of famine.
22. What this takes is patience. This is the principle that opens both verses 7 and 8. In verse 8, it reads, “Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.
23. This patience stresses the principle that the Rapture, although imminent, may not occur in this farmer’s lifetime, therefore, he is to continue to follow established policies in the function of raising crops.
24. Verse 8 borrows from the agrarian example in verse 7 to apply the principle to the imminency of the Rapture. It is next on the prophetic agenda, but the timing of its occurrence is known exclusively to God.
25. Therefore, it is not and may not be considered a problem-solving device. It is a prophecy that brings an end to the dispensation of the Church Age.
26. The patience that the believer has in this context should be focused on growing in grace. While the Lord delays, he is able to accumulate more doctrine in his soul furthering his advance in the plan of God.
27. This principle is brought out by the phrase in verse 8, “strengthen your hearts.” The word “strengthen” is the aorist active imperative of the verb, **στηρίζω (stēρίζō)**.
28. This verb’s commandment is extremely important to understand in this context. *Stēρίζō* admonishes the believer to become steadfast in mind, to confirm and strengthen his inventory of doctrinal ideas in his stream of consciousness.

29. From this inventory of working objects, the believer's inventory of doctrinal power enables him to endure the circumstances common to the hostile environment of the devil's world.
30. This is made clear by the following term, "your hearts," the plural noun, **καρδίας (*kardías*)**.
31. As you well know, this word refers to the soul's essence with emphasis on its stream of consciousness, the place where doctrine is stored for recall and application.
32. In verse 8, there is a sequence of three words that define the mentality required to endure the exigencies of the devil's world:
 1. **"Patient"**: the aorist active imperative of **μακροθυμέω (*makrothuméō*)**: This term places emphasis on the soul where all solutions to temporal problems are resolved or not. Solutions to worldly problems can only be resolved by the soul's ability to apply doctrine to the circumstances. This indicates that the believer has a relaxed mental attitude toward life and circumstances.
 2. **"Strengthen"**: the aorist active imperative of **στηρίζω (*stēρίζō*)**. This verb stresses the spiritual advance that takes the believer to the level of the sophisticated spiritual life by application of the principle, "the Word of God is alive and powerful."
 3. **"Hearts"**: the plural noun, **καρδίας (*kardías*)**: facilitation of the soul's doctrinal inventory into paths of least resistance and therefore available on the soul's launching pad for recall and application.
33. When the believer has advanced to this level of doctrinal sophistication, then he is prepared to orient and adjust to any circumstances, exigencies, situations, and challenges that the devil's world has to offer.
34. When a believer buys into the truth that he is an alien in the devil's world, is not wanted here, is the ongoing target of cosmic propaganda, and vulnerable to strategies of the Dark Side, he has a divine dynasphere into which he may ensconce himself.
35. The divine dynasphere, life inside the bubble, is his readily available environment where the power of the Word of God isolates him from the propaganda of *cosmos diabolicus*.

