

Facing Trials Patiently James 5:7-12

We return this morning to the Letter written by the half-brother of Jesus, James, to the dispersed Jews around the Roman Empire. The theme of the book is demonstrating our salvation through our works. Not obtaining salvation by works but simply demonstrating that we have been saved by the blood of Jesus.

This morning our passage focuses on being patient during our trials and struggles. That is not easy to do, but is one of the ways that we demonstrate the reality of the power of the Holy Spirit dwells in us. So let's dig into the text.

James 5:7 (ESV)

7Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

The previous 6 verses in chapter 5 James rebuked the wicked rich over their treatment of their poor servants and slaves who we believe are the dispersed Jewish Christians the letter is written to. Now here in verse 7, James seems to shift the focus from the wicked rich to the persecuted.

James tells the dispersed Jewish Christians they are to be patient, until the coming of the Lord. It was very common in the first century church for believers to get very anxious about the

return of the Lord. They thought He would be returning at any moment and since Jesus had ascended only a few years earlier, it is likely that they really anticipated He would return very soon. I can imagine that when they are being oppressed, it was very easy to give up thinking that Jesus would be back very soon. Not only give up but shut down.

The word that we see translated here as coming is a very important word in Scripture dealing with the return of the Lord. Its meaning is much deeper than Jesus Coming. It would be better translated as arrival because it has not just the act of returning but His very presence as well. The early church was longing for the presence of Jesus to be with them again.

Not think about those Jewish Christians being oppressed by their bosses. The Jewish Christians had no recourse but had to live with it. I am sure that they longed to have Jesus with them and their enemies defeated. But every day that ticked by was another day Jesus did not come.

James tells them that they need to be patient for the arrival of the Lord. Patient like the farmer who plants his crops in the field but then has to wait. There is nothing that the farmer can do it is really out of his control. The rain will come or not when God directs.

The early and late rains are a reference to the normal rain patterns in the Levant. Rain comes early before planting to loosen up the ground and then later as the plants are growing.

The Jewish Christians would have understood the typical pattern in the Levant.

James 5:8 (ESV)

8You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Just as the farmer has to be patient, waiting for the rain to come, with nothing they can do to make it come faster, we as Christians can do nothing to hasten the return of the Lord. We simply must be patient. Quite frankly I think it is a little easier for us to be patient than it was for the early church. We have two thousand years without the Lord's return makes it a little easier for us to think it may still be quite awhile before the Lord arrives. But the early church did not have so many years of time passed. But in this verse, James establishes a very important doctrine for the church of all ages. The imminent return of the Lord is an important doctrine for the church. The church is always to anticipate that the Lord will return at any time. It provides us with a little urgency, it provides us hope. If the return of the Lord is imminent, then it is the next big thing on the eschatological calendar. Which means we should be anticipating it at any time.

Patience also invokes within us a sense of acceptance of the situation while we wait and hope for the return of the Lord. I don't think the Lord or any of the Apostles taught that we are to be thrilled when we face difficulties or even persecution. But we

are to accept that God knows what He is doing and what He is doing is always best. When we focus on Jesus return, we are motivated to live better and more obedient lives than if we think that Jesus will not be coming back during our lifetime. I remember as a kid the question was asked what would you do differently today if you knew Jesus would return today. Most people have some thought they would act better, more obedient like God did not already witness everything you did. The reality is that we should all act the same on the day Jesus returns as on any other day. We should always be thinking Jesus is returning at any moment.

One of the things that we should be doing as we anticipate the Lord's return is to not grumble about others.

James 5:9 (ESV)

9Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

“Do not Grumble” is an interesting word in the Greek. It means both not to sigh and to not complain excessively under your breath. James had just instructed the Dispersed Jewish Christians to be patient with the overbearing wicked rich. He now instructs them to have patience in dealing with others in the church. I want you to know this is sometimes really hard. When you see another Christian doing something that they should know is stupid, or just plain wrong and they won't listen. Or

even when they go after you directly. We are to not grumble or complain excessively under our breath about them. I think that means that we are to deal with them directly and not go around speaking about them to others. That's hard because sometimes you just want to make an example out of them, but James tells us not to.

Look at the verse again. We should not grumble so that we are not judged. Judged here is used in a way that makes the statement more condemned. It is what the judge does at the end of the trial when he pronounces the verdict and then declares the person guilty.

We are to not grumble against other Christians so that we are not adjudicated guilty by God. Not only found guilty but found guilty at the time Jesus returns. How embarrassing would it be to be found guilty when Jesus returns?

James reminds us that Jesus is at the door, He could return at any time. We should act as He could return at any time.

James 5:10 (ESV)

10As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The Prophets in Israel had a difficult time. Most of them were rejected by the people because most of the time they had to bring the hard truth of bad conduct of Israel and Judah. Many of the Prophets were beaten and some were even killed in the

performance of their duties. Yet, despite their struggles and abuse, they remained steadfast in their service of the Lord and they're proclaiming the truth from God to the people. It was not to remain positive as they were abused. The prophets are the example for the church today. We need to remain steadfast in being obedient to God despite the struggles we face, even the abuse we face.

James 5:11 (ESV)

11Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

I am fascinated by Job as an example for the church. Job was a true follower of God, who lived a good life and was truly blessed by God. But then in order to prove a point to Satan God took everything from Job and even inflicted him with great sores. If we did not know the entire story, we would say God was really ticked at Job and punished him accordingly. Job refused to curse God, he refused to give up his trust and loyalty to God. He refused to be disobedient to God. When the point was proven to Satan God rewarded Job even more than he had before.

That serves as the perfect example for us to remember. Despite what is going on, the abuse we face, the difficulties we face for

whatever reason we are to remain loyal and to trust of God. Just as Job did.

One additional instruction in our text this morning,

James 5:12 (ESV)

12But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

The truth and telling the truth is difficult for the unregenerate world and is not what they are known for. But it should be what the church is known for. The honesty of a follower of Jesus should be so good, the reputation should be so good, that there is no need to take an oath, to swear to tell the truth.

Remember who and what we are as followers of Jesus. We are to emulate the character and nature of the Lord in everything we do. We know that God cannot lie so it should be something we cannot do as well. But I am afraid in our culture and society today lying is not such a big deal. We are constantly surrounded by people telling a lie. It used to be it was just used car salesmen we thought were always lying and now it is everybody, all around us.

But you should be known for telling the truth. In everything. No little white lies, no excuses that I did not want to hurt them. We are told to tell the truth. To the point where when we say yes it is

yes and when we say no it is no. there never should be doubt about the veracity of our word.

Imagine that you have reputation for playing a little loose with the truth. Then you have an occasion to present the gospel to someone. Well I not sure I can trust what they say because they have lied to me so many times before. You see how that can impact the mission God has given us. That is not Good.

Conclusion

So, what have we learned today from these verses?

We have learned that we need to be patient as we wait for the return of the Lord. Despite the difficulty we have with abuse and or persecution we need to trust that God's plan always works out properly.

Being patient does not mean just waiting it also means focusing on being obedient and remaining active while we wait. Like the farmer who needs the rain at the right time does not wait for the rain to begin work, he trusts that God will send the rain at the right time and he must be ready.

We learned we can't grumble about other Christians, always complaining about what they do. We need to stand ready to help them and teach them but not complain about them.

We learned that part of our obedience is our honesty. We should always be known as honest and always telling the truth. A failure in that makes giving the gospel so much harder.

Next week, Lord willing we will conclude our study fo the book of James with one of the most difficult set of verses in the book and maybe the new testament.

Let's Pray!