



Forever and Ever

Kicking It Off

When you were a kid on a long car trip, were you the "Are we there yet?" type or the patient passenger, and has that changed as an adult?

Read

James 5:7-11

Summary

We get impatient when things take longer than we think they should. We're stuck in traffic, and suddenly we're angry because our fifteen-minute drive just became two hours. That same impatience shows up in bigger ways too. We're waiting for God to move in our lives, and when it takes too long by our standards, we start thinking we could do better if we had His power. That's pretty arrogant when you think about it.

Patience is not just sitting around doing nothing. Think about farmers back in ancient times. They couldn't make it rain, but they still had tons of work to do. They'd prepare the soil, plant the seeds, do everything possible to get ready. Then they'd wait for rain, knowing it would come eventually because that's what rain does. But if they got impatient and tried to force growth on their own terms, they'd miss the whole point.

That's us with God. We do the work He's given us, like loving people and sharing what we know about Him, but we can't make the growth happen. Only He can do that. And when we get impatient with Him, we start getting impatient with everyone else too. We judge people for not being where we think they should be, forgetting that God's been incredibly patient with us and all our mess.

The real question isn't how slow everyone else is. It's whether we're willing to stick with God even when things don't look like we expected, even when the ground feels dry and dusty, even when there's no visible growth yet. Because the goal isn't getting what we want on our timeline. The goal is being with Him forever, through the good times and the hard times, trusting that His timing is better than ours.

Discussion Questions

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?
2. We often become impatient with God when His timeline doesn't match our expectations for how quickly things should happen in our lives. In what area of your life are you currently struggling to wait patiently on God's timing?
3. When we're impatient with God, that impatience tends to spill over into how we treat and judge others around us. How have you noticed your own impatience with God affecting the way you view or interact with other people?
4. Farmers in ancient times had to do all the work of preparing their fields while recognizing they had no control over when the rain would come. What "field preparation" work is God calling you to do right now while you wait for Him to bring growth?
5. The best testimonies focus on how big God is rather than on how much we've grown or succeeded. If you were to share your story with someone this week, how would you describe God's role in your life in a way that magnifies Him rather than yourself?
6. True covenant commitment means being willing to follow God through poverty and sickness, not just through prosperity and health. What would it look like for you to remain faithful to God even if your current circumstances never improve?

Significant Quotes from Sermon

"A part of following Christ is following Christ. I know it sounds so simple. I know it sounds so easy. Oh, I'm a follower of Jesus. I follow his will. I follow his ways. I follow his words. But if he takes too long, if he leaves me in the dust, in suffering where I do all the work and there's no rain, there's no growth, you know what? I'm going to say I follow Jesus, but I'm going to figure out how to make my own irrigation."

"If God judged your sin expeditiously, if he did it quickly, I just really want you to follow me here. If God judged you the moment you sinned, how many people would be in this room? The answer is zero. So God's patience is a form of his grace, in that he is patient with people who deserve judgment."

"When you share your testimony, you are sharing: I am this small but my God is so big. The best testimony is God loves an insignificant speck like me. And he allowed this insignificant speck like me to be a part of his kingdom. And I'm learning through this experience of following him that I'm not so insignificant, that I am significant because the God of all creation has deemed me significant."

"Waiting patiently on God is having faith and knowing that even though you may be afflicted now, that it's temporary, that you will come face to face with the Lord forever and ever. Are you willing to follow God even in the pits? Even in despair, even in the lows that you can be in, are you still willing to surrender and submit to the Lord?"

Sermon Notes

James 5:7-11

7 Be 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. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, 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.

Outline

I. WAIT PATIENTLY (James 5:7-8)

A. The Farmer's Example

1. Farmer waits for precious fruit through early and late rains in two distinct seasons
2. Doesn't sit idle but prepares extensively, though no one could control when rain comes
3. Years of drought and plenty depended entirely on the rain

B. Preparing for Christ's Return

1. Rain metaphor points to second coming of Christ who will bring restoration
2. Farmers do all the work, but growth only happens when rain comes
3. Called to work preparing for His return, not twiddle thumbs (Psalm 27:13-14)
4. Rain will come because we have a good God who desires growth

C. The Danger of Self-Reliance

1. Impatient heart learns other ways to water fields and make crops grow
2. We try to figure out our own irrigation, dig our own wells
3. Following Christ means actually following Christ, even when He takes time
4. Gathering celebrates when rain comes, not our work
5. Ministry is doing the work while understanding if God doesn't come, there's no growth

D. The Frustration of God's Timing

1. Holy Spirit dwells in us, but Jesus hasn't returned yet
2. When encountering problems, we try to fix them instead of longing for His return
3. Called to make disciples (Great Commission), but when there's no growth, answer is: not time yet
4. This is about endurance through seasons when ground seems like dust

II. WATCH CAREFULLY (James 5:9)

A. Impatience Breeds Judgment

1. Impatience toward God spills over into impatience with others
2. "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged"
3. The judge is standing at the door

B. Grumbling Reveals Our Hearts

1. We grumble because people aren't good enough yet, attitude they're not as good as us
2. Grumbling leads to judgment, gossip, divisions and fundamental lack of focus

C. Following the Judge

1. Together not to judge one another but to follow the Judge
2. Question isn't what God thinks about others, but what He thinks about me
3. Being patient means being watchful of the Judge, keeping eyes on Jesus

D. The Log and the Speck (Matthew 7:1-5)

1. Don't judge others when we have logs in our own eyes
2. God's patience with us is His grace; if He judged sin immediately, none would be here
3. God is patient with people who deserve judgment, making Him the best judge

E. Called to Be Saints

1. If you believe in Jesus, you are a saint because Christ's works made you one
2. Jesus removed the log and bore it Himself; justice served by His death, not ours
3. This creates humility; not about judgment but watching carefully
4. Would Jesus condemn or call people to repentance, restoration, and love?

III. WITNESS BOLDLY (James 5:10-11)

A. The Example of the Prophets and Job

1. Prophets who spoke in the Lord's name are examples of suffering and patience
2. We consider blessed those who remain steadfast
3. Job's steadfastness shows the Lord's compassion and mercy
4. Job understood his place in God's timeline, a speck compared to God's power

B. Multi-Generational Wisdom and Testimony

1. Church meant to be multi-generational so there can be shared wisdom
2. Testimony of how God did make it rain, will make it rain, will bring restoration
3. Tragic when stories of people who suffered, waited, then experienced restoration aren't shared

C. The Nature of True Testimony

1. True testimony says: I am small but my God is so big
2. Problem with testimonies centered on personal growth or success
3. Best testimony: God loves an insignificant speck like me and allowed me into His kingdom
4. Learning I'm significant because God deemed me significant
5. Powerful testimonies are about kingdom of God, how great the Father is
6. Despite suffering, our goal, King, and Savior are greater

D. The Full Spectrum of Faith (Hebrews 11:32-40)

1. Faith brought victories: conquered kingdoms, stopped lions, escaped sword
2. Faith also led to martyrdom: tortured, mocked, imprisoned, sawn in two, killed
3. Sometimes following God doesn't result in outcomes that look like what was promised
4. Promised flourishing life, but may be afflicted temporarily
5. Waiting patiently means having faith that affliction is temporary
6. Will come face to face with the Lord forever and ever

Notes

We often misunderstand patience. We think of it as passivity, as sitting still and doing nothing while time passes. But true patience is anything but passive. Patience means keeping your focus, maintaining your gaze on what you know to be true even when it hasn't yet materialized. It's about continuing down a path with the confidence that there is an end to the journey, a destination you will reach if you persist. Think about taking a long road trip as a child. You're in the back seat, unsure of where you're going or how long it will take. Your parents tell you it's six hours away, but as a child, six hours might as well be forever. You ask repeatedly, "Are we there yet?" Your limited attention span makes the wait feel interminable. Meanwhile, your parents in the front seat can see the navigation, know exactly where they're going, and understand the timeline. They find your impatience amusing because they have perspective you lack. But before we become too comfortable judging childish impatience, consider how we react when stuck in traffic. When a fifteen-minute drive turns into a two-hour ordeal because the freeway is shut down, our patience evaporates quickly. We're not so different from that child in the back seat after all.

Here's something we need to grasp: our expectation of the timeline directly impacts our patience. When we think something should take a certain amount of time and it takes longer, we become impatient. This isn't just about traffic or road trips. This is about life itself. Many of us find ourselves in situations where things are simply taking too long. We wonder why God is delaying, why His timeline seems so inefficient compared to ours. We need to recognize how arrogant this attitude truly is. When we tell God that He's being slow, when we suggest that the Creator of the universe isn't operating as efficiently as we think He should, we're displaying remarkable hubris. We're essentially claiming that His timeline, His efficiency, isn't as good as ours. At the root of our impatience lies a fundamental distrust in God's control. So what do we do? We complain. Even as faithful churchgoers, we ask God, "Are we there yet?" This happens at every stage of life. Single people who desire marriage ask, "Are we there yet?" Married couples hoping for children ask the same. People in their careers wanting advancement or greater responsibility echo this refrain. And this frustration, this impatience, stems from distrust. Now, asking God for strength to endure is entirely appropriate. There's nothing wrong with praying, "God, please help me. I'm struggling. I need your strength to endure this trial." That kind of prayer demonstrates submission. It says, "God, I submit to your will, your power, your timeline. I believe your timing is right, your efficiency is good, your plan is sound. I just need help. I need strength to stand firm." That's vastly different from saying, "God, I don't like your timing. I don't like how slow you are." The latter attitude reflects arrogance. It essentially declares, "If I had your power, I would do

better. If I knew what you knew and had your abilities, I would create a better life for myself than the one I have now."

This impatience doesn't remain contained between us and God. It spills over into how we treat others. When we're impatient with the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who holds the universe in His hands, we inevitably become impatient with the people around us. If God doesn't meet our timeline, regular people certainly won't. They won't be as quick, as smart, or as powerful as we think we are. And so we begin to pass judgment on one another. James addresses this directly. He begins with a command: "Be patient." And this patience isn't idle. It's active, more like endurance or long suffering, where you actively wait and actively hope. James writes, "Be 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. You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand." The farming analogy perfectly illustrates active patience. In ancient Israel and Palestine, rain came primarily in two seasons. Farmers had to wait for these rains, and this required enormous faith, especially before modern meteorology. They simply knew the season and trusted that God would bring rain. But farmers didn't just sit idle between rainfalls. They had substantial work to do to prepare. They needed to be ready so that when rain came, they could benefit from it. This preparedness is crucial to understanding patience. In that era, no one claimed they could control the rain. Everyone involved in agriculture understood that rain would come when it would come. There were years of drought and years of plenty, and the years of famine typically coincided with lack of rain. The people had to understand that waiting on the Lord was an active process requiring preparation.

James uses this agricultural metaphor to point toward something greater: the second coming of Christ, the return of Jesus. The end times can be summarized simply: Jesus promised to return, and when He does, He will make things better. He will bring life, growth, redemption, and restoration to the world in ways never before seen. This isn't something to fear but something to long for. Rain serves as a fitting metaphor here. Farmers can do all the work they want, tilling soil, fertilizing, planting seeds, but growth doesn't happen until rain comes. There's something vital in this truth about how we live as Christians. Too often, we wait for Jesus to return with idle anticipation, merely wishing He would come back today. And while everyone who believes in Christ should feel that ache, that desire for His return, this patient longing must be paired with understanding. The rain hasn't come. Jesus hasn't returned. There is work to be done to prepare for His return. This might confuse some. What work needs doing when Jesus returns? Won't everything be complete? But this isn't merely a New Testament concept. Psalm 27 expresses the same idea: "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the

land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord." The Israelites understood that there was joy in seeing God's goodness in the present. They knew what it was like when it rained. They knew God's presence brings life, makes seeds grow into sprouts. Gathering together meant celebrating God's incredible power to make things grow, to bring rain that produces fruit. The Jews understood that when God's presence was there, goodness followed, like morning dew or rain filling the land and nourishing crops. So what do you do? You wait on the Lord. You prepare for the rain. You do the work that needs doing in the dust and dirt. You dig trenches, plant seeds. And when all the work is done, farmers surely think, "It's time for rain, God. I've prepared the field. Now I need you to come and do what you do best." So much of ministry follows this pattern. So much of loving one another works this way. It's about doing the work while understanding that if God doesn't come, if God doesn't show up, there will be no growth. James explains to his readers that they should be patient because rain will come. It's not a matter of hoping it might rain. It will rain because we have a good God who loves us and desires growth in us, in our communities. He wants to see good things emerge. He wants His presence to be there.

But here's where things get challenging. The farmer who has done all the work, all the toil, who has spent everything to prepare the field, can begin looking at God and asking, "So what have you done for me? Where's the rain? Where are you?" This represents the heart of an impatient person. The impatient heart has no time to wait on God. The impatient heart learns there are other ways to water fields, other ways to make crops grow, other avenues to achieve success. The core issue is this: following Christ means actually following Christ. It sounds simple, even obvious. We say we're followers of Jesus, that we follow His will, His ways, His words. But if He takes too long, if He leaves us in the dust and suffering, if we do all the work and see no rain and no growth, we start thinking we'll follow Jesus but also figure out our own irrigation. We'll dig our own wells. We'll fill our own cisterns. We'll produce enough water for our crops, enough spirituality, enough spiritual fervor, because God doesn't show up. We've been suffering, toiling away, and God never comes through for us. But gathering together as believers isn't about celebrating our work. The point of coming together isn't to admire how big our fields are or how well we've planted or how excellent our worship is or how full our services are. None of that matters ultimately. What you celebrate is when the rain comes, because rain gives purpose to everything you've done. And the crucial understanding about rain is that it's completely outside your control. The Lord sends rain when He determines it should come, and that's above our pay grade. Many times and in many scenarios, we do good work, and God is essentially saying, "Yes, you've done well preparing your fields. You've stewarded well the resources I've given you. You've done a

good job raising your family. But what you need to understand at the core is that you must wait on me. Stop trying to figure out how to live this life apart from me. Learn to rely on me and keep your eyes focused."

Do we long for the coming of Christ? We don't talk much in church about the second coming because it sounds extreme to say "the end is near." But the desire for His return is the same as saying, "I've done all this ministry, all this work. I've tried to raise my family well, to have good relationships with my spouse and community. How much better would all of this be if Jesus came back?" If He returned, we should hope everything would be better, would make more sense, because He would be back and would give purpose and meaning to it all. Here's the reality: the Holy Spirit dwells in us, but Jesus hasn't returned yet. We have daily opportunities to wait patiently on how the Holy Spirit leads us, but the Son, the second person of the Trinity, has yet to come. We're called to wait patiently for Christ's return. We don't talk about this much because when we encounter problems, we don't typically long for the second coming of Christ. Instead, we try to fix things ourselves. We band together to make solutions happen, to make it rain. But Christians aren't called to just twiddle their thumbs. We're called to tend the fields, plant seeds, do the work God has called us to do, which includes making disciples of all nations. We're called to the Great Commission. Yet when we experience frustration and impatience, when we're making disciples and spreading the Word and teaching about the Bible but not seeing growth or transformation or revival, the answer that comes back is simply: it's not time yet. Not time for His return, not time for His second coming.

And honestly? That's frustrating. How wonderful would it be to stand in the middle of Seattle during a major event and announce that Jesus is coming back today, that people need to repent and turn, and then have Jesus actually descend on a cloud? That would be amazing. But that timeline reflects our will, not God's. It's about us. We've done the work and want God to do our bidding, to do what we want.

But faithful followers of Christ must follow Jesus. And if Jesus is taking His time, He's doing it for a reason. This is about endurance, about understanding what it means to endure suffering, to endure seasons of life when the ground seems like dust, when it doesn't even seem like soil. There's a difference between dust and soil. You can't grow anything in dust. You can at least try to grow something in soil because there's life in it. Some seasons feel like planting in dust or sand, in places where there should be no growth. And in those times, we begin to grumble and become impatient. This grows inside us like cancer, a frustration that inevitably manifests outward.

James describes how this looks: "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold, the judge is standing at the door." The person who

remains patient with God's timing begins to look at people differently. When you understand God's timeline, recognizing that our story is still being written even though it seems slow and inefficient to us, you approach others with a different attitude.

When we're impatient, grumbling enters our hearts. We wonder why people aren't good enough yet, why they don't get it, why they don't do better, why they're still so immature. We question why they don't understand how to do things properly, why they're terrible at everything, why if everyone just understood things the way we do, life would be better. We ask why people still steal, do drugs, remain addicted to alcohol. This attitude suggests these people aren't good, that they're not as good as us, not as good as Jesus. We grumble, we judge, and we love to take the next step into gossip. This creates divisions. There's a fundamental lack of focus. The reason we're together isn't to judge one another but to understand that we follow the Judge and wait on His judgment. When we interact with people, it shouldn't primarily be about our assessment of them but about God's assessment. He's standing at the door. He is judging. And if we're truly patient and waiting on God's will, on the will of the Judge, the question isn't what God thinks about other people. The question becomes: what is God thinking about me right now? How am I living my life? Being patient isn't twiddling your thumbs. Being patient means being watchful of the Judge, keeping your eyes on Jesus, watching carefully to see, hear, and be led by what God is leading you to do.

Jesus explains this beautifully in the Sermon on the Mount: "Judge not that you not be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye' when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Jesus explains that we don't judge one another because we have our own issues to deal with. When we look out at the world and see everyone with problems, everyone with junk in their eyes, thinking this isn't how God meant it to be, that He didn't intend for everyone to be so messed up, so perverse, sinful, bad, greedy, and malicious, we can go on and on about all the things we see in society and culture. We declare they're evil, terrible, unredeemable. But we're not being very patient with culture or the city or God. What God wants isn't for us to pronounce judgments on people. God wants us to be repentant about what's in our own eyes. We have logs in our own eyes. We struggle with sin. The beauty of patience is experiencing God's grace as patience. God essentially says to us, "I have relented my wrath on you. Even though you deserve death, I have waited. I am patient in my judgment toward you." Consider this carefully: if God judged sin expeditiously, if He judged us the moment

we sinned, how many people would be in the room? The answer is zero. If every time we messed up, said a bad word, watched something inappropriate, treated someone unkindly, or did something outside the bounds of Christianity, if we were judged immediately, none of us would be here. God's patience is a form of His grace. He is patient with people who deserve judgment. Does this make God a bad judge? No. It makes Him the best judge. We're the ones who look at God and ask, "How could you be so lazy? How could you relent and allow them, in their big cities with all their crazy ideas and cultures, how can you allow them to survive? We heard what you did in Sodom and Gomorrah. Why are you taking so long to do that here, where we live righteously?" When churches adopt this rhetoric, declaring that society will burn down, it raises a question: what about your church? There must be no sin in your church whatsoever if you're calling down fire and brimstone on sinners. Your church must be full of entirely righteous people. But the truth is, if you believe in Jesus, you are a saint. We should call one another saints. The church is a gathering of saints. We should avoid even calling each other sinners because there's judgment in that language. When we call someone a saint, we mean it not because of their works but because we believe in the power of Christ, and His works are so good that they've made that person a saint. Now they must act like one. You're a saint because Jesus loved you, died for you, shed His blood for you. Now you claim to follow Jesus. So when you go out into the world and tell people they have a speck in their eye, when you judge one another and grumble, declaring how evil everything is, remember: you got here because you were in that same condition. You got here because you had that log in your eye that Jesus removed. Jesus took it out and bore it on Himself. Justice was served, not by your death but by His death.

This creates humility. As Christians, it's not about judgment. It's about watching carefully. The question should be: what would Jesus do? Would Jesus stand on street corners telling everyone they're going to burn in hell? Or would Jesus call people to repentance, restoration, kindness, and love? Would there be an invitation to come be part of the family, to enter the fold where restoration is possible? That only comes by God's power. So we find ourselves looking at the clouds, wondering when Jesus will come, when He will bring the rain that brings revival to our area, to our region. For whatever reason, the answer isn't now. If the answer were right now, it would be wonderful. But as we wait patiently, we prepare and keep our eyes focused on Jesus. The answer isn't now, but it might be tomorrow. And even if you knew it would be ten years, if you knew that in ten years Jesus was coming back to bring revival and restoration to the land, would that change your life? James continues: "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard the steadfastness of Job,

and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

Waiting patiently connects to witnessing boldly. Everyone in the church is at a different life stage. Even if you're in exactly the same stage of life as someone else, you have a different life, a different story, a different struggle. Your relationship with God is unique. We've lost something valuable when we only meet with people exactly like us, in the same life stage, same age, same marital status, same number of children. Church was never meant to be homogeneous. Church is meant to be multi-generational, with children alongside the elderly and everyone in between. Why? So there can be shared wisdom, shared testimony of how God did make it rain, of how God will make it rain, of how God will bring restoration. The church contains countless stories of people who went through suffering, patiently waited on the Lord, and then experienced His restoration and revival. It's tragic when these stories aren't shared among us, when stories of redemption remain untold, when we don't hear how God brought restoration and revival, how He used suffering to witness to His steadfast love. James uses Job's story. Many people read the first few chapters of Job and then jump immediately to the end because it provides a satisfying narrative arc. Job loses everything at the beginning, and at the end, God restores everything Job lost. But there's substantial content in the middle. God speaks to Job through his friends, though these friends were terrible, essentially telling Job he lost everything because of hidden sin. Job constantly protests that this isn't the case. Job's story really concludes not just with restoration but with God speaking to Job, asking, "Who are you? Were you there when I made the earth? Were you there when I did all the things you see?" Job comes to understand his place in God's timeline. He understands he's but a speck compared to God's power.

When you share your testimony, you're declaring: I am small, but my God is so big. What's troubling about certain testimonies is when well-meaning people essentially say, "I was this big and God made me this big." That's not compelling because it remains centered on the person. When someone's testimony focuses on how their business made this much money and God blessed them so they made even more money, that's not truly a great testimony because it's still about them. The best testimony acknowledges that God loves an insignificant speck like me. He allowed this insignificant speck to be part of His kingdom. Through the experience of following Him, I'm learning that I'm not actually insignificant, that I am significant because the God of all creation has deemed me significant. He has said He loves me and cares about me. Therefore, I can surrender to His big, great, wonderful will. His plan is wonderful. His kingdom is awesome. The most powerful testimonies aren't about the person sharing but about the kingdom of God, about how great the Father in heaven is, about how, despite hard and difficult

circumstances and situations, despite great suffering, their goal is greater, their King is greater, their Savior is greater. Hebrews 11 elaborates on this beautifully, listing great figures of faith like Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped lions' mouths, quenched fire's power, escaped the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. But then the passage continues: "Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these though commended through their faith did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect." Hebrews presents the full spectrum of what following the Lord truly looks like. It begins with the victories of those who followed God, stories like David and Goliath, where God brings victory. Many of us think that's God's will: for us to defeat our Goliaths. We love hearing those sermons about how God will help us defeat our giants. But Hebrews presents another side of following God: sometimes following God means martyrdom. Sometimes following God's will means being sawn in two, being killed for the faith. Sometimes following God doesn't result in outcomes that look like what we thought was promised. We're promised life, a flourishing life, a good life. But when you wait patiently on God, there can be that attitude of protest: "You promised me a flourishing life, but they're about to kill me, persecute me. That doesn't sound like the promise you gave me." Waiting patiently on God means having faith and knowing that even though you may be afflicted now, it's temporary. You will come face to face with the Lord forever and ever. A way to become more patient is to understand the goal clearly. Many of us forget that the goal is to be united with Christ forever and ever. We desire to exist forever and ever with Jesus, where He leads and guides us, where God provides for us, protects us, nourishes us, leads us, shepherds us. That sounds like a very good existence. Marriage vows include the promises: richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. But there's a way we approach relationships where we focus on the richness, the health, the times of plenty, but not so much the poverty, sickness, or drought. Today's approach to covenants often centers on whether the other person makes you happy, whether they bring value to you. This is dangerous because we then approach God the same way, saying, "God, I entered this covenant to be rich. I entered this covenant to be healthy. I entered this covenant to be prosperous." The beauty of covenants is committing through riches or

poverty alike. Christians and followers of the Lord must ask: are you willing to follow God even in the pits, even in despair, even in the lows? Are you still willing to surrender and submit to the Lord? Repentance and confession require being truthful to God, acknowledging the sinful aspects of our hearts: "God, I only want to follow you if it means success for me. God, I only want to follow you if it means I look good. God, I only want to follow you if it bolsters my reputation. I only want to follow you if I can improve my status. I only want to follow you if I get what I want."

That's the wrong way to view relationship. We must repent and say, "Sorry, Lord. I'm sorry for making this about me. Give me a heart to follow you forever and ever, in the highs or the lows, whether I have plenty or am in want. Give me the strength to endure, to be steadfast, to love you in all seasons."

Blog

Waiting is one of the hardest things we do. We wait for test results from the doctor. We wait for that phone call about the job. We wait for broken relationships to heal. We wait for wayward children to come home. And the longer we wait, the more our patience wears thin. James understood this. He knew that his readers were suffering, and he knew they were getting tired of it.

In James 5:7-11, we find a letter writer addressing a community under pressure. These believers had just heard a scathing condemnation of wealthy oppressors who were hoarding wealth and defrauding workers. The rich were living in luxury while the righteous suffered. And in the middle of this injustice, James tells them to wait. "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord." It's a command that might sound tone deaf until we understand what biblical patience actually means.

The word James uses for patience is *makrothymia*, which literally means "long tempered." It's the opposite of being short fused. But this isn't passive resignation. It's not the patience of someone who has given up and decided to just endure whatever comes. This is active, determined endurance. It's the patience of someone who knows that God is working even when we can't see it yet. The command comes in the aorist tense, which means it's decisive. James isn't suggesting patience as one option among many. He's commanding it as the posture believers must take while living between Christ's first coming and His return.

To help us understand this kind of patience, James gives us a picture. "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." This illustration would have resonated deeply with James's original audience. In Israel, farmers depended entirely on two rainy seasons. The early rains came in October and November, softening the hard ground so it could be plowed and planted. The late rains came in March and April, providing the moisture crops needed to mature before harvest. Miss either season and the crop failed.

But here's what makes this illustration so powerful. The farmer works hard. He plows, he plants, he tends. This isn't lazy waiting. Yet for all his labor, he cannot make it rain. He cannot force the crop to grow faster. He must wait for the rain to come in its season. He trusts that it will come because it always has. God's faithfulness in creation (Genesis 8:22 promises seedtime and harvest will never cease) gives the farmer confidence to keep working while he waits.

We're like that farmer. We work hard at our marriages, at our jobs, at raising our kids, at fighting sin, at serving the church. But we cannot force the outcomes we long for. We can't make the cancer go away. We can't make our employer see our value. We can't make our teenager choose wisdom. We can't manufacture spiritual growth on our

timetable. Like the farmer, we must wait for God to bring the rain in His time. And that waiting requires the kind of long suffering patience that trusts God's timing even when it doesn't match our hopes.

James then tells us to "establish your hearts." The word means to make firm, to fix steadfastly. It's the same word Jesus used when He told Peter to "strengthen your brothers" after Peter's restoration. Our hearts (the center of our will, emotion, and commitment) need anchoring because the wait is long and the circumstances are hard. We establish our hearts by fixing them on the certainty of Christ's return. "The coming of the Lord is at hand." Not soon necessarily, but near. Imminent. It could be at any moment, and that imminence should shape how we live today.

But James knows something else about waiting communities. When people are in pain, they often turn on each other. "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the doors." The command here uses a present tense with a negative, which means "stop doing what you're already doing." They were grumbling. They were groaning against each other. And James says stop it.

Think about waiting in a long line at the DMV or the theme park. At first, everyone's patient. But as time drags on, people get irritable. They start snapping at family members. They complain about other people in line. They need someone to blame for their frustration, and the easiest targets are the people closest to them. That's what was happening in James's church. The suffering believers were making each other the enemy instead of bearing with one another in the struggle.

James's warning is sharp. The Judge stands at the doors. Not far away, not eventually coming, but standing right there. Christ could return at any moment, and when He does, He will evaluate how we've treated each other. This creates urgency. It matters how we speak to our spouse when we're frustrated. It matters how we respond to the brother who annoys us at church. It matters whether we extend grace or hold grudges. The Judge is coming, and He cares deeply about how His people love one another in the midst of suffering.

To encourage this community, James points them to examples. "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord." The prophets were people who proclaimed God's truth and suffered for it. Jeremiah was imprisoned and thrown in a cistern. Elijah fled from Jezebel's threats. Amos was opposed by the religious establishment. Yet they persevered in their calling, and history vindicated them. God's word through them proved true even though they didn't live to see the full outcome.

Then James mentions Job. "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." Job is an interesting choice because he wasn't a prophet. He was a righteous man who lost everything through no fault of his own. His friends accused him of secret sin. His wife told him to curse God and die. He sat in ashes scraping his sores with pottery shards, wondering why God had abandoned him. But Job didn't abandon God. He questioned honestly, he lamented deeply, but he held onto his faith. "Though he slay me, I will hope in him."

The word James uses for Job's endurance is *hypomone*, which is slightly different from the *makrothymia* of verse 7. This is active, courageous persistence under trial. It's not merely waiting patiently for circumstances to change but remaining faithful while they don't. Job embodied this. And what was the outcome? "You have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." God restored Job's fortunes, gave him twice what he had lost, blessed his latter days more than his beginning. The restoration wasn't just material but relational and spiritual. Job encountered God in a new way through his suffering.

This is the hope James offers. God is not distant or indifferent or harsh. He is "compassionate and merciful." The words echo descriptions of God throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 103:8, Exodus 34:6). God feels deeply for His suffering people. He has purposes in their trials that go beyond what they can see in the moment. And He will bring about outcomes that display His character and accomplish His good plans.

We need to hear this. When we're in the middle of suffering, when the wait stretches on and on, when we can't see any good coming from our pain, we need to remember God's character. He is not indifferent to our tears. He is not punishing us for sport. He is accomplishing purposes that we will one day see and bless Him for. Job couldn't understand his suffering while he was in it. But looking back from the restoration, he could testify to God's goodness.

James calls those who endure "blessed." This is beatitude language, the same word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be blessed doesn't mean to have an easy life. It means to be in the favor of God, to be on the path that leads to ultimate flourishing, to have a future secured by God's promises. We count those blessed who have remained steadfast because we know their endurance will be rewarded.

And here's where the gospel breaks through with full force. Everything James says about patient endurance, about trusting God's timing, about remaining faithful through suffering, about being vindicated in the end, finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Jesus waited patiently through thirty years of obscurity before His public ministry began. He submitted to the Father's timing at every turn, even when His brothers urged Him to reveal Himself. He endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy set before Him. He suffered unjustly, was condemned though innocent, died though He deserved life. And God raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection is God's great "Yes" to every promise of vindication. It's the ultimate proof that patient endurance under suffering leads to glory. Jesus trusted the Father's timing and plan, and the Father exalted Him to the highest place. Now Jesus sits at the Father's right hand, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 10:13), and we wait with Him for that final day when He returns to make all things new.

This is why we can be patient. This is why we can endure. This is why we can strengthen our hearts and stop grumbling against each other. Not because we're strong enough to gut it out, but because Jesus has already won the victory. His return is certain. His promises are sure. The Judge who stands at the doors is the same Jesus who died for us while we were yet sinners. He knows what it means to suffer unjustly. He understands our groaning. And He is coming back to wipe every tear from our eyes.

So we wait. Like farmers trusting the rain will come. Like prophets knowing truth will prevail. Like Job holding onto faith when everything visible argued against it. We wait for the Lord, whose compassion never fails and whose mercy endures forever and ever.