

## THE WAITING ROOM

Title: Part 4 – “Endure to Mature”

Date: August 2, 2026

As we continue in this moment of worship and prepare our hearts for the teaching of God's Word, let's take a minute and make some space for God to work in our lives. One of the practices we often incorporate into our services is a chance to pause and give God all our cares and worries. For some of you this might be the first time you have done this in a few days, so let's pause now and give God EVERYONE and EVERYTHING. Close your eyes and just say that under your breath, “God I give you everyone and everything...” Now as the band plays softly just take a few moments and give God all the things and all the people on your heart. Lovingly detach yourself from the cares of this world.

### [PRAYER TIME]

Hey, before you grab a seat, take 30 seconds and say “Hi” to some people around you. While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi” to each other, I want to say “Hi” if you are joining us online or on our app. Thank you for spending some time with us! We consider you a part of our church family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you. We'd love to walk alongside you in any way that we can.

Well, how's everyone doing so far? Can I just say something about what we just did before we get into this? Pausing and giving God everyone and everything, that's not a nice ritual we do to settle the room down before the real stuff starts. That IS the real stuff, amen? Because what we just practiced together is the single hardest spiritual skill there is! Taking your hands off something you cannot control and putting it in the hands of God, that is vital for your soul.

AND that is exactly where we've been for four weeks now in a collection of messages called “The Waiting Room.” If you have your Bible or the Bible app, go ahead and find the book of **James**. It's in the back section of your New Testament... if you find Hebrews go a little further and if you landed at 1 Peter or 1 John, you went too far, take a left.

James was written by the half-brother of Jesus, which makes these words extra special to me, but let's read it and then we will break down where we are going today. James chapter 1, starting in verse 2, here we go:

<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

<sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup> But when

you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

I hope you came ready to hear from God today because we have a lot to unpack!

BUT first let's get back in the flow for anybody joining us for the first time or coming back after a Sunday or two away. As I mentioned we are in part four of a five-week collection of messages wrestling with one question: **What do you do when there is nothing you can do but wait?** What do you do when there's no way forward and no way out. When you've prayed every prayer and pushed every button and your circumstances just sit there.

We approached that question by visiting a bunch of different waiting rooms, right? Week one, in the doctor's office: we said don't read God's silence as God's absence. Week two, in the auto repair shop: we learned sometimes you have to receive the thing you'd rather return as a gift with a purpose and a promise. Week three, at the DMV: the center of your discontentment is the epicenter of God's activity. If you missed any of that catch up on our app.

BUT every single week we've been preaching the same thing back to our souls. Say it with me if you know it:

***Even now, God is not absent; He is present. He is not apathetic; He is attentive. He is not angry; He is filled with affection for me.***

AND today we are going to see this from a different kind of waiting room. This one's different from the others, because in this one, you're not the patient or the customer. This waiting room is the tiny, hard plastic chair outside the principal's office at your kids school!

Some of you have lived this. Maybe it was your kid, maybe it was YOU years ago, but everybody knows this room. The office has that smell which is a mix of industrial floor cleaner and old copy paper. There's a laminated poster on the wall about MAKING GOOD CHOICES, which feels a little ironic right now. And there's a secretary at the desk who will not make eye contact with you, which is how you know it's bad.

Next to you, in an identical tiny, hard plastic chair is your kid staring at their shoes. Their body language is saying, "Dad, do something." Because that's what you've always done. Skinned knee, you cleaned it. Broken toy, you fixed it. Bad dream, you sat on the edge of the bed until it passed. Bully at recess, you made a phone call.

BUT this is different. You could walk in that office and argue. You could talk it down, spin it, get the punishment reduced, negotiate the consequence away. You have that power. BUT you don't use it. WHY? Because somewhere in your gut you know that the consequences are not the enemy here. As a parent you know the most loving thing you can do for your wayward child right now is nothing. You know that if you rescue them from this, as minor as it might be, you rob them of something they will need in life when the stakes are a lot higher than a two-day suspension. Right?

BUT when you are a kid, you can't see that. When you are a kid you just think your parents are being mean because they won't do anything. As a kid you don't think they even care!

Which is not true. It is BECAUSE you love and care so much that you are willing to do the hardest thing possible, which is to NOT rescue them from the consequences of their actions.

## **Do you see where I'm going with this?**

When we talk about waiting on God or times when God seems distant or silent, when that happens we have to consider the fact that SOMETIMES, not all the time, but sometimes, we are the kid in the hard, plastic seat in the hallway outside the principal's office and God is the parent choosing to let us face the consequences of our actions.

Today I want to preach a message I'm calling:

### **"Endure to Mature"**

AND before we go any further let me be clear, I don't want to crush someone who has lost a child or had a spouse walk out on them. My little illustration isn't always accurate. Sometimes you didn't do anything to land yourself in this waiting room. The illustration was more about the parent's restraint, not the kid's guilt. BECAUSE sometimes we have to endure to mature.

That is what we see in our main text today from James. AND I love that James is the one who wrote this because knowing who James was gives this passage so much more depth. As I mentioned, James was the half-brother of Jesus. They grew up in the same house, same dinner table, same mother (different Father), but same chores, same shared experiences.

BUT read the Gospels. During Jesus' entire public ministry, James is nowhere. He's not a disciple. He's not a follower. He's not quoted. John's Gospel actually tells us straight out that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him! Meaning James watched all this

stuff go down that we read about and he thought, "That's my brother, and he's lost his mind!"

AND before we are too hard on James, let me ask you. Be honest. What would it take for YOUR sibling to convince you they were the Savior of the world sent by God? Some of you just laughed out loud, because you know your brother. You know your sister. They could feed five thousand people and you'd say, "Probably catered it." Right? They could have walked on water and you'd say, "Just the camera angle."

BUT then in the Book of Acts, we see James taking a central role in the church. So, what changed? Not the teaching. Not the miracles. You know what changed James? He saw his brother alive after watching him die! The resurrection! That's what turned a skeptic into a leader of the first-century church, AND eventually into a man who would be executed for the name of a brother he grew up wrestling with in the backyard.

AND that's why verse 1 (which we skipped before) hits you like a 2×4 upside the head. Because when James picks up his pen, he doesn't write, "James, brother of Jesus," which he had every right to. Instead, he writes this:

**James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...**

{MIND BLOWN} Right? So, when this man tells you something about suffering, this is not theory. This is a man who lost every argument he ever had with his brother, and then lost his life for Him.

SO, as we continue to work our way through what you do when there is nothing you can do but wait, write this down if you are taking notes today:

### **1. Count it before you feel it.**

You have to count it before you feel it. BUT what is "it?" Go back to verse 2 now (this time from the New King James Version as it translates this verse a little better, not just *consider* but...):

**2 COUNT it all joy when you FALL into various trials.**

AND here's what happens in most of us when we hear that. Somebody's got a family member going through chemo. Somebody's been out of work and can't find a job. Somebody buried a parent this year. Somebody has actually been the parent in the principal's office three times last school year. And then this verse shows up on a coffee mug, and you want to take the mug and hit the person upside their head with it. Amen?

So, let's talk about what James is saying here, AND let's name what's actually happening under the surface for some of you. Because when a season drags on long enough, three thoughts start showing up. We named them in week one. **I'll never be happy again**—it's all downhill from here. **Nothing good can come from this**—don't tell me a nice Bible story, you don't know my situation. And the darkest one, **there's no point in continuing**. No point staying in this marriage. No point doing the right thing when the right thing never seems to pay off. No point taking care of my body, no point being generous, no point being kind. No point at all...

So, James, in one sentence, is going after all three at once. Because if there's a chance, come on, if there is a chance that God is producing something through this wait, then it's not the end of your happiness, it's not hopeless, and there very much is a point in continuing.

James does this by using an accounting term, "COUNT" that means to reckon. Not like if you are from the south and you are about to do something... "I reckon I'm gonna head out now." No! Reckon like to count. To evaluate. To do the math on something and enter it in the correct column. James is not saying "feel" joy when you go through various trials and difficulties. He's not asking you to be happy about the cancer. He is saying: **when the ledger gets written, don't put this in the loss column yet. You don't have all the numbers in.**

Then look at the next word. "When you FALL into various trials." That word means to fall into something UNEXPECTEDLY. The same word Jesus uses in the parable of the Good Samaritan for the man who "fell among" robbers. This isn't the trouble you signed up for. This is the phone call you weren't expecting. The scan they want to redo. The note left on the counter that says we need to talk.

So put it together: **when something blindsides you, before you write it off as a total loss, do the math again. Consider that it might be the source of something good.**

Why? Verse 3:

**<sup>3</sup> because you know that the TESTING of your faith produces PERSEVERANCE.**

Can we be honest about the first half of that? Trials put your faith on trial. That's what "testing" means. But it's not only your faith that goes on trial, is it? **God goes on trial too!** That's the part we don't say out loud in church. But every one of us has looked up

at some point and said, "Really? I've been faithful. I've been a good husband. I've been a good mom. I gave. I served. And THIS is what I get, God... Really?" Is anyone honest enough to admit that today?

I love that James wrote it this way though because it means he knows. He's not writing to people who never doubted. He was a doubter. He was a skeptic.

AND he says this testing produces something. What does he say? Right, perseverance! The Greek word is hypomonē **{hy-pom-oh-NEE}** and it's a picture word that means to remain under. It's not the picture of a guy escaping a weight. It's the picture of a guy staying under a weight until something in him changes.

This is what you do every time you work out. You want a bigger muscle? There is only one way. You load it, and you stay under the load until it fails, and then you rest, and then you do it again. Nobody has ever grown a muscle by describing the weight. Nobody's ever grown a muscle by watching somebody else lift it, or by reading about it, or by believing really sincerely that they COULD lift it. NO! You get under it! AND you stay under it! That's the whole secret!

But here's the thing. James isn't talking about your body. He's talking about something happening on the inside of you. And for a long time, that's all we could say about it, because you can't put a soul on a scale. Right? BUT we can measure your brain now!

Have you ever heard the phrase "neurons that fire together, wire together." That comes from a psychologist named Donald Hebb, and it's one of the foundations of everything we now understand about neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity meaning every time you choose a thought, you strengthen a physical connection in your brain. Repeat it enough, and the brain literally builds the pathway, wires it in, makes it a highway instead of a trail.

So, when you're in a waiting room, and you choose, you CHOOSE, when everything in you wants to choose otherwise, to say "Even now, God is not absent, apathetic or angry..." That's not just a nice thought. That is construction. You are laying down road in your own head, one repetition at a time. **BUT you cannot lay that road down in a season where nothing's hard, any more than you can build a muscle by sitting still.**

So, count it before you feel it. Do the math again. That's number one. Then:

## **2. Stay under it until it's finished.**

We just alluded to this when we were talking about the gym. You have to stay under it (the weight) until it's finished. Verse 4 again, this is the heart of the whole passage:

<sup>4</sup> **LET** perseverance finish its work so that you may be **MATURE** and **COMPLETE, NOT LACKING** anything.

Notice that first word, LET perseverance finish its work. Which implies you can stop it, doesn't it? You can interrupt it. You can pull the plug on what God is doing before it's done. AND we are living in a time and in a culture that has some options for that! Right?

We can get out from under it by hitting the divorce button, the bankruptcy button, the affair button, the bottle button, the pill button, the "I've got a new job so here is my two-week notice" button, the "I'm moving to a different city and starting over" button, the "I'll get my parents to go down to the school and get my schedule changed" button, the "This church is asking too much of me, I'm gonna find a church where I can just blend in and they will serve me" button... There is a button for almost every kind of pain today! AND every single one of them promises the same thing: **you don't have to stay under this if you don't want to.**

AND James, who has watched his own brother die for the sins of the world, who endured the cross, says: Wait! Not so fast! Let it finish its work in you! **BECAUSE** look what's on the other side! Three words: *mature, complete, not lacking* anything.

AND please hear me, James is not saying if you are being physically harmed in a relationship then you should just stay until the work is done. OK. He's not saying never leave a toxic work environment that is causing you real physical problems. BUT he is saying before you do anything, you first count, you count it joy because this might be an opportunity to become more mature, more complete, and not lacking in anything on the inside. Amen?

SO, let's talk about the word "mature" that James uses because I think a lot of Christians have the wrong idea about it. What does a mature believer look like? Is it Bible knowledge? Someone who has memorized a lot of verses and knows proper doctrine? That's a great thing to do AND it will make you smart, but it won't guarantee you are mature. So, is it obedience? Keeping the rules, doing the right things, you don't drink, smoke or chew or date girls who do? That's all great stuff too, and it will make you good, but it won't make you mature.

Here's what James says makes you mature. You ready? He says what? "You LET perseverance finish its work." That's the only way named in this passage. James might say it this way today, take a picture or screen shot of this:

***Spiritual maturity is measured in persevering faith, not perfect behavior.***

AND maybe you know some people like this. You know a follower of Jesus who's a little rough around the edges, doesn't use Sunday school language, doesn't have a neat and tidy past. But their confidence in God is so deep it's almost intimidating! You hear their story and it's the story of a person who walked all the way down into the valley of the shadow of death, and God made them CAMP there for a while! Maybe even for years. BUT they came out the other side still believing.

AND here's what they always say. They say, "I would never want to go through that again. But I wouldn't trade it for anything, because of what it did in me." Right? And you sit there in awe of them. And you're not in awe of their Bible knowledge. You're not in awe of their behavior. You're in awe of the DEPTH of their confidence in God. That's maturity! And they got there because they stayed under the weight of their wait, and let perseverance finish its work!

Church hear me, a faith that only ever gets a YES from God is not impressive. Because that's not faith, that's a good-luck charm. Anybody can believe in a God who always says yes. The faith that stops people in their tracks, the faith that makes a skeptical coworker listen up, is the faith that got a NO, or got nothing at all, and **kept believing anyway!**

That's the faith God honors! That's the kind of faith that honors God!

Charles Spurgeon once said in a sermon:

**"The wave of temptation may even wash you higher up upon the Rock of Ages, so that you cling to it with a firmer grip than you have ever done before."**

Meaning the wave isn't taking you out. The wave is putting you somewhere. And the grip you have on Christ on the other side of this thing will be a grip you have never had before in your life. You don't get that grip in the good years. You get it in the tempest and the waves!

So, don't hit the eject button. Not yet. Let it finish its work. AND when it all seems too much for you and too confusing, James gives us one more thing:

### **3. Ask for the bigger picture.**

James does something incredibly pastoral in the remainder of this passage because he knows he's asking a lot. And so, verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, [Meaning WHILE you are letting perseverance finish it's work in you through various trials, if you lack wisdom THEN] you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

If any of you—any of you who's marching down into that valley, any of you sitting in that waiting room, any of you white-knuckling the arm of that chair—lacks wisdom, ASK!

And here's what wisdom means in this context. Write this one down too or take a picture:

***Wisdom is the ability to see your current circumstances from a broader perspective.***

That's the ask. Not God, change it. Not God, get me out. But God, **let me see this the way You see it.**

NOW if you're a parent, you do this every single week. Your kid comes flying in the door, and their world has ENDED. Absolutely ended. Because of a text message. Because somebody sat somewhere different at lunch. Because so and so played with someone else and didn't want to play with you. And, if you're a decent parent, you sit down and you take it seriously, and you say, "Oh honey, I know, I know... one day this won't be so hard." And then you walk into the kitchen and think, "I would give anything for that to be my biggest problem today."

Right? You're not being dismissive. You just have a bigger frame of view. You've lived longer. You can see next week and next year, and they can only see right now.

That's the gap between you and God! And James says you can ask Him to close it, NOT by changing your circumstances, but by widening your view.

**WHICH TAKES US** all the way back to that hallway outside the principal's office. Because here's what your kid doesn't have in that chair: perspective. They could not see the future you were seeing. All they could see was that dad was sitting there doing nothing to rescue them from the pain.

But watch verse 6 now, because James adds a condition to all this, he says:

<sup>6</sup> But when you ask, [For God to give you a greater perspective] you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Remember, James isn't scolding you for wrestling. This is the man who spent three years unconvinced Jesus was who He said He was. Wrestling is not the enemy of faith; wrestling is often faith fighting to hang on. NO! The word he uses for doubt means "divided," or literally "two-souled."

Picture a guy trying to stand with one foot on the dock and one foot in the boat. That's the word. It's the person who half-trusts God and half-trusts their circumstances at the same time, SO whichever one is louder that day is the one that wins. When the report is good, they're up. When the news is bad, they're wrecked. That's why James reaches for the picture of a wave. Because a wave is in constant motion BUT never actually goes anywhere. It just rises and drops and gets shoved around by whatever wind is blowing.

SO, the opposite of doubt here isn't "having it all figured out." The opposite is picking a foot to stand on! And James is saying, "Plant it on this, that there is a good Father who is up to something, even when you cannot see it and want to run."

In other words:

***You decide that God will use what He may not remove.***

You decide! Not feel. Decide He will USE it. Every ounce of it. Nothing in your waiting room is going to waste!

Somebody in here needs to hear this. There is a version of you on the other side of this thing that does not exist yet. That future version has a grip on Jesus that your comfortable years could never have given you. That version can sit across the table from somebody falling apart and say four words that nobody else in the room can say, "I have been there." Listen, that version is being built RIGHT NOW, in the chair you're sitting in, in the season you'd give anything to skip. God is not wasting your wait! Amen? God is not wasting your wait! He is not wasting one single day of this!

SO, here is your homework as we get ready for back-to-school time. Here's your homework. One prayer I want you to pray every day this week. And can I make a suggestion? Pray it out loud. Something happens when your own ears hear your own voice say something true. Here it is, say this out loud with me:

***Heavenly Father, I believe You will use this until You choose to remove this.***

***Grant me wisdom to see as You see, and strength to do as You say.***

Say it every morning. Say it in the car. Say it in the parking lot before you walk into the appointment... I believe You will use this until You choose to remove this. Grant me wisdom to see as You see, and strength to do as You say.

Some of you walked in here today with your hand on the eject button. You know which one. And I'm not going to shame you for being tired, because you have earned your tiredness. But I'm asking you today, don't push it just yet. Let perseverance finish its work. Because what God is building in you in this waiting room is the very thing He's going to use in someone else's life on the other side of it, AND that's exactly where we're going next week to close this out.

BUT even now... Even now, God is not absent; He is present. He is not apathetic; He is attentive. He is not angry; He is filled with affection for you.

He's in the hallway with you. He hasn't left. And He is doing the hardest thing love ever does sometimes, nothing.

Would you stand with me while I pray.

**[PRAYER TIME]**