

Authentic Christianity

Patience

James 5:7-11

February 28, 2021 am

HDBC

What do you do when someone does something to you that really really irritates you? **Spot good parking space** at Wal-Mart and just before you get to it some hot shot comes out of nowhere and zooms into it.

Your boss crawls all over you for a mistake you did not make and you are humiliated in front of co-workers. **A friend says some unkind things about you behind your back and you find out about it.** How do you respond?

There are at least two voices that will try to get your attention. One is saying **Go Get Em! Don't Let Them Get Away With it.** The other says, **Forget It, Let it Go, Walk Away.** Which one do you most often listen to? Revenge may be sweet, but it is not Christian. And it usually turns sour soon after it is done.

James has written to help us understand what an **Authentic Christian** looks and acts like in a culture that pushes back. We've already learned so much from his letter, but there is more to learn. In 5:7-11 James highlights one of the most important character traits needed to demonstrate *Authentic Christianity*.

Patience Word is used four times in these verses and is the dominant theme.

Read Text – James 5:7-11

Backdrop

In order to get the full impact of James' words, we need to note two things that provide a backdrop to his words. First . . .

1) Oppression and suffering of the saints

We know in general that the readers were experiencing various levels of suffering. We've seen it throughout the letter. But there is an even more direct context. Note the word **Therefore** in verse 7.

This word ties this section with the one that precedes it. In the previous section James has scolded those who were using their wealth and power to

oppress others. He condemned wealthy unbelievers who were oppressing poor believers. He now turns to the recipients of that oppression.

Note the shift from *you rich* (1) to *brethren* (7). Different audience. Now he is writing to help us understand how to respond when oppressed, when we suffer, when we experience injustice. But there is a second part to this backdrop that we must consider.

2) **Second coming of Jesus**

The present situation was dire for those believers, as it is for many believers around the world today. However, certainty of the second coming of Christ was for them and is for us today a source of great comfort and assurance.

James references it in 7, 8, 9. Clearly that was on James' mind as he wrote to encourage his brothers and sister. That must remain on our minds as we seek to respond to the challenges that we face in being *Authentic Christians*.

The N T contains over 300 references to Christ's return – one of every thirteen verses! **The Scriptures ooze with the return of Chris. (Kent Hughes)** These believers were being kicked around like a soccer ball, so they longed for the return of Jesus, which would bring relief to them and judgment to their oppressors. With that backdrop in mind, let's consider the **Instructions**.

Instructions

He offers four words of advice.

1. **Be Patient (7)**

Be patient translates a compound word *makrothumesate*.

Makros - A long way, far. *Thumos* - Passion, Heat, rage, anger.

To keep anger, rage, or heat a long way away. Thus the common translation, **long-suffering**. Ability to *endure suffering, hardship, personal assault for a long time without retaliating*. It is having a long-fuse, not a short fuse.

As a child I loved fireworks. I respected them. Problem was with length of fuses. Never tell how fast they might burn. Therefore a long fuse gave you more security. Time to be safe.

James offers an illustration:

Farmer - Prepares the land, plant the crops. And then when it was all done he can only sit back and hope for the proper rains to bring the crop to fruit. That waiting, is an illustration of patience. While waiting, there would be some good signs and some bad, but all he could do was wait.

Early and Late Rains

In October it starts with light showers. These are the early rains. Dec-Feb really heavy. March-April they fade off. Farmer counts on early rain to soften & loosen the soil. He needs the late rains to complete the process.

Patience is what is needed while waiting. But we live in a culture that does not like to wait.

While researching for this message I came across some information that I thought I might share. I wanted to copy and paste it into my sermon notes. When I tried my computer locked up.

My first thought was ***not now, come on computer!*** I tried again and the same thing happened. That's when it hit me that I was growing impatient while preparing a message on patience. **God has a sense of humor.**

James is calling for a mindset that recognizes God is working in the **here and now**, so don't interfere with what He wants to do in us or the other person. But also that God will ultimately judge the oppressors.

2. Strengthen Your Heart (8)

To prop up or support something that is heavy. To fix something firmly in place, so that it is immovable.

Normally when we have been hurt our hearts are heavy. Even true when our fuse is long and we refuse to retaliate. It produces a heaviness that can quickly lead to *self-pity and bitterness*. The heart must be strengthened.

How can our hearts be strengthened?

A. Remember the Coming of the Lord

There are three words used in the N.T. to refer to the coming of the Lord.

Epiphania – An appearing or a manifestation of Christ.

Apokalupsis – An unveiling or a revelation which refers to the full display of Christ's power and glory.

Parousia – this is used here. It emphasizes Christ's physical presence, literally meaning **being alongside of**. Used in this way 15 times in the N.T. in reference to Christ's return. These suffering people longed for the personal presence of Christ. There is a second way to strengthen your heart.

B. Remember that God is Still in Charge

God has not stepped away from his throne. He is still in charge and uses the frustrations and difficulties that come our way to mature us, refine us and to make us more like Jesus.

I think of the 50/20 Principle. It comes from Genesis 50:20. Climactic verse in the life of Joseph, who experienced setback after setback, yet continued to trust God. His own brothers sold him into slavery and told his father that he had been killed by a wild animal. When his brothers finally had to stand before him they were fearful because he had risen to great power and had the authority to have them executed. Listen to him.

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

That's the 50/20 principle. While others are doing harmful things to you, God may very well allow it because He wants to do something good.

3. Stop Complaining (9)

To groan or sigh, Internal attitude of self-pity. *Murmuring. Complaining under your breath.*

We do it with words, expressions, looks, and actions. Might be against the ones who wrong us or against others who seem to be untouched by the wrongs. Basic idea is of murmuring because of a grudge.

*The wheel that squeaks the loudest is the one that gets the grease.
The wheel that squeaks the loudest is the first to be replaced.*

James points out that our wrong response can actually expand God's judgment to include not only those who wrong us, but also ourselves. Our reaction to wrong is just as significant to God as the wrong done against us.

4. Learn from Others (10-11)

James provides a couple of examples for us to follow.

A. The Prophets (10)

Read Hebrews 11:33-37

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the end of the sword,

From weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their [w]release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶ and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, [w]they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸ (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

B. Job (11)

Don't get the wrong impression of Job. He did not calmly welcome the adversity that smothered him. He *struggled with it, questioned it, and agonized over its meaning.*

Endurance speaks of **steadfastness**, of **endurance under a load of stress**. The key was that through it all, he never lost his faith. He never gave up on his relationship with God. He was sustained by it.

Compassion - Large hearted.

The point James is making, is that God is going to make it all ok. He is still in charge. The prophets kept their sanity through that knowledge. Job was able to hang in, through that knowledge, though it took some time for him to come to that realization.

Simple takeaway: ***Do right when you are done wrong!***

Specific helps:

- 1) **Don't focus on the situation.** You will become frustrated.
Be patient & anticipate how God will work.
- 2) **Don't focus on yourself.** You will become self-centered.
This will lead to self-pity. Choose to be strong.
- 3) **Don't focus on the present.** You will become near-sighted.
Look for future insights and ultimately for the return of Christ.

Patience inspires hope. Hope inspires endurance.

There's a great story about Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian writer who spent years in a Siberian prison.

At one point he had become completely discouraged and decided to give up and die. His plan was to stop working out in the field, to lean on his shovel, and wait for the guards to come and beat him to death. However, when he stopped, another prisoner reached over with his shovel and **quickly drew a cross at his feet, then erased it before a guard could see it.**

Solzhenitsyn later said that his entire being was energized by that little reminder of the hope and courage we have in Christ. He found the strength to continue because a fellow believer cared enough to remind him of our hope.