

MBC – 1/30/2022 – Pastor Doug Thompson  
 JAMES: TESTS OF A LIVING FAITH  
**“Be Patient Until the Coming of the Lord”**  
*(And Don’t Waste Your Waiting)*  
 James 5:7-11

Well to put this morning’s passage in context, we need to re-cap last Sunday’s passage. We saw that James wasn’t speaking *to* his Jewish-Christian audience here, but he is speaking *about* the evil rich fat-cats who oppressed and abused them—

➤ James 5:1–11 <sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for *the miseries that are coming upon you*. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in *the last days*. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in *a day of slaughter*. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

This is rough stuff. There is no Gospel here. No call to repentance. These people are damned. But in v.7, James turns back to Christians, and his whole tone changes. He calls them brothers. Now he’s speaking as a shepherd. He wants them to be encouraged that their enemies are not getting away with anything. The day of the Lord is coming. Jesus is returning, and He will set everything aright—

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

(Pray)

**Intro - *The Day of the Lord is coming!***

Everything in vv.1-11 is pointing to the return of Christ—

In v.1: *“the miseries that are coming upon you.”* Those aren’t temporal trials in this life. James means God’s coming judgment.

In v.3: *“<sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire”* – when? At Christ’s return. They have laid up their treasure *“in the last days,”* and when Jesus does return, for the unrepentant, it will be *“a day of slaughter.”*

- The privileged users and abusers of this world might *not* suffer much in this life – Hey, they can buy and bribe their way out of a lot of pain and sorrow. But they won't escape judgment in the next life. *That* is when justice will be served.

And when he turns back to Christians in v.7, this is his encouragement to them: when Jesus returns, their enemies will be punished, and they will be vindicated—

V. 7: “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until *the coming of the Lord*.”

V.8: “*for the coming of the Lord is at hand*.”

V.9: “*the Judge is standing at the door*.”

He doesn't say, “Cheer up, things will be better tomorrow!” No, he says, “Be patient for *that* day, the *coming* day. *That* is when justice will come. So be patient, and take heart, Christian!”

We really need to hear what is being said here—

- I think that when many Christians think about Jesus coming back, it's just sunshine and roses: we all float up to heaven and are handed our harps, then we head off to choir rehearsal to learn our parts for the Hallelujah Chorus!

But that's a wimpy picture of the Second Coming. It's so much bigger than that. Beloved, our Jesus will return as a conquering King – read Rev.19! - With a robe dipped in blood, on a white horse with a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth and a rod of iron to destroy His enemies! Amos said the day of the Lord will be a horror for those who reject God—

- Amos 5:18–20 <sup>18</sup>Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, <sup>19</sup>as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. <sup>20</sup>Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

And it will literally be the end of this universe and the birth of a new heaven and new earth—

- 2 Peter 3:10–13 <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (Good news for us – terrible news for unbelievers.) <sup>11</sup>Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup>But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which *righteousness* dwells.

And that righteousness means holiness and justice!

- John said in Revelation 21:27 - <sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until *the coming of the Lord*. I'm not saying that we gloat over the destruction of the wicked – how could we when we are only spared the same fate by the undeserved

mercy of God? But shouldn't we long for God's righteousness to be shown, and His justice to be carried out – for the sake of His glory!

In this present evil age, God is mocked, Jesus is ignored, and His people are seen as stupid, backward, and intolerant. Jesus was murdered by evil men, and they still persecute and kill his people. If you love God that should grieve you, greatly – that God's name is dragged through the mud, that Christ, your Savior, is dishonored?

- That abortion continues – and our governor wants to make California a “sanctuary state” to promote and encourage abortions? If you don't want to see that evil *judged*, then your heart is not right.

When we pray the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, “Thy Kingdom Come,” this is a big part of what we are praying for. The Heidelberg Catechism has such a beautiful balance on this. Listen as I read it, and savor it—

**Question 52:** *How does Christ's return to judge the living and the dead comfort you?*

**Answer:** *In all my distress and persecution I turn my eyes to the heavens and confidently await as judge the very One who has already stood trial in my place before God and so has removed the whole curse from me. All His enemies and mine He will condemn to everlasting punishment: but me and all His chosen ones He will take along with Him into the joy and glory of heaven.*

Is this this your hope this morning? “Then,” James says—

### **I. The call to patience.**

- “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until *the coming of the Lord*.”

The word for patient is *makrothumia* = it means to have a long fuse. Slow to blow. To Christians who were suffering greatly, and unjustly due to indulgent, unscrupulous, evil people, James says, “Cool down, remain calm and confident in God's sovereign timing. He hears your cries! He knows when you are ripped off, over-taxed, and treated unfairly. Your heavenly Father knows, and He cares.”

- *Patience* is continuing to believe the same things you always believed about God, while the injustice continues on, for as long as it continues on. Do you still believe God is good, and just, and all-powerful to punish all evil – even when you can't see it? And why would you believe what you can't see? Because God's promises are truer than what you can see or what you feel!

So patience sounds a lot like faith, doesn't it? Listen: *Patience is just faith, stretched out!* Patience means living by faith, not by sight, as long as the pain and injustices continue. And they won't last forever, and neither does our patience have to last forever—

**\*The expiration date on patience!**

- “until *the coming of the Lord*.”

When it is so hard to wait, take heart: you don't have to be patient forever! Only *until* the Lord Jesus splits the skies and descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God! And we won't need patience anymore, because the moment has arrived. We won't need faith because we will have sight. We won't need hope because it will be realized. When Jesus comes back, His people will never again cry out, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

\*I want to add this eschatological footnote here: James is saying what all the NT writers say: This all goes down when Jesus returns – at His Second Coming: Jesus comes back – once, not twice, the dead are raised, judged, the universe is purged with fire, and eternity begins in the new heavens and new earth. And our patient waiting for justice is over—

- 2 Thessalonians 1:7 “. . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels <sup>8</sup>in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” We won't have to wait 7 more years after a secret Rapture, or 1,000 more years for an earthly Millennium. That's our blessed hope.

Then James gives us 3 examples of *how* to wait patiently for Christ's return—

## II. While you are waiting—

### ***A. Be patient like a farmer, trusting God for the harvest.***

- V.7 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.

James didn't need to explain farming to his readers. They all knew that farmers make their living by being patient. The only crop that grows overnight is weeds! When I was a kid growing up in the Midwest I was surrounded by corn fields and soybean fields owned by farmers who *worked*, and then pretty much, they *waited* on God for their harvest. Many farmers only get one paycheck a year – after the harvest. That takes patience.

- In Palestine, the early rains come in October and the latter rains come in the Spring in April and May, and those farmers were completely at the mercy of God for both of those rains. And they knew it! They could plow their fields, scatter the seed, and pull the weeds, but they couldn't control the weather or cause those seeds to grow – only God can do that. So they had to know when to work and when to wait. And while they were waiting, God was still working.

Isn't that something we all need to learn – when to work and when to wait? I love a parable Jesus told. It's only in Mark's Gospel—

- Mark 4:26–29 <sup>26</sup>Jesus also said, “The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground (the seed is the Gospel). <sup>27</sup>Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces the crops *on its own* (Gk. automate = *automatically!* At least that's what it looks like – but it's really God causing the growth). First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. <sup>29</sup>And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.”

We need to be like farmers: faithful to do the work God has called us to for His Kingdom, and then patiently wait, *trusting Him* for the growth and for the harvest. And we do that by remembering that while we are waiting, God is working, in His way and in His time. And in the context of our passage, justice is still coming, even if it seems slow. Listen—

- Psalm 37:7–9 <sup>7</sup>Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! <sup>8</sup>Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. <sup>9</sup>For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

Beloved, generations of Christians have lived and died, waiting for Jesus to return since James wrote this – we’re not going to rush the Second Coming! So “wait patiently for Him.”

But while you are waiting—

### ***A. Establish your hearts.***

The word means to *strengthen* – to suck it up and steady yourself for the pressures and trials that are coming while you wait. We have said before, “Waiting for the Lord” is never a passive thing, it takes effort to wait with patience. This word for “strengthen” was used back in—

- Exodus 17:12 Israel was fighting against the Amalekites, and as long as Moses held his hands up, the battle would go in their favor, but we read this: <sup>12</sup>Moses’ arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset.

While we are waiting for God’s justice to come, we don’t “let go and let God,” We need to “*discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.*” Pray this prayer: “Father, what fruit of the Spirit needs ripening in my life, right now? Love? Joy? Peace? Patience. . .?” Then get to work: read, pray, memorize. Pick up a good Christian book, and dig into it (there are a few dozen free books over in the library right now). Men, come to the men’s study on Saturday mornings.

We need to help each other while we are waiting, just like Aaron and Hur helped Moses—

- Hebrews 10:24–25 <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

And that’s exactly what James says - “*for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*” We want to be ready to meet our Lord, amen? Are you ready, right now? John said this, and it should make think—

- 1 John 2:28 <sup>28</sup>And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

And then gives a pastoral admonition. Something we are prone to do while we are waiting for Jesus to return—

### ***B. v.9: “Do not grumble against one another.***

- *Do not grumble against one another brothers,*

It's so easy to turn on each other – our brothers and sisters in Christ – when we are all suffering and struggling under injustice and oppression.

Haven't we seen that happen since this Chinese bat flu began? Just because some Christians see things differently than others? Beloved, the only winner in those battles is the devil. We can disagree on that kind of stuff until the cows come home, but we have so much more in common in Christ, don't we? And that's what we should be displaying to the world: our love for Christ and our love for one another. Here is why we should stop picking on each other—

- *so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*

I.e., Christian, the same Judge you are awaiting to judge your enemies, is also going to test all of your works by fire—

- 1 Corinthians 3:13 <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.
- 1 Corinthians 3:15 <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

So stop taking out your impatience on your brothers and sisters in Christ – James nails it, doesn't he? And—

***B. Be patient like the prophets, suffering for speaking the truth.***

- <sup>10</sup>As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.

Here is the point: God's choicest servants suffered for righteousness sake – and yet responded with patience. The first one that comes to my mind is poor Jeremiah—

- Once he was beaten and put in stocks; the priests said he deserved the sentence of death. Another time he was thrown into an abandoned cistern and left to die in the mud – do you remember that? When his friends went to rescue him, he was so emaciated that had to tie cloth around ropes to put under his armpits to pull him up out of the mud.

King Jehoiakim took the entire hand-written scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies, cut it up and burned it in his fire. He was called a liar and accused of being a false prophet . . . but he remained steadfast. Listen to what God told Ezekiel—

- Ezekiel 2:1–7 <sup>1</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you." <sup>2</sup>And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. <sup>3</sup>And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup>The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus

says the Lord God.<sup>5</sup> And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. <sup>6</sup>And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. (ouch!) Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. <sup>7</sup>And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

And then there was Isaiah. God commissioned him in Isa.6 to go and preach to a people who would never listen to a word he said – he eventually died by being put into a hollow log and sawn in half.

What do we learn from the example of the prophets? You can live a godly life; you can boldly speak the truth, and suffer greatly for those very things. That is unjust! It's not fair, but expect it to happen in this present evil age. I'm sure James was thinking about the words of His brother, Jesus—

➤ Matthew 5:11–12 <sup>11</sup>“*Blessed are you* when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Where is the reward? Not here. On the other side. But when your faith is strong enough to grasp the reality of that promise, you are blessed, and you rejoice and are glad – here and now – for what is to come. It is coming, beloved, as sure as Jesus is coming and His reward is with Him. And faith gives you the foretaste of that glory divine.

So for now – adjust your expectations: *expect* to suffer for your faith in Christ, especially when you “speak in the name of the Lord,” look beyond this life for your reward. And be patient.

### ***C. Endure like Job, hoping in God's purpose.***

➤ V.11: You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Now James doesn't something interesting here: He doesn't use the word for patience, makrothume, he uses the word hupomone, the word we saw back in ch.1 that means “to remain under,” or “staying power.” We need God's grace to stay put during trials and learn God's lessons for us.

Now the KJV gives us the phrase here, “the patience of Job,” but James doesn't say Job was patient, just that he *endured*. He didn't do what his wife said and “curse God and die.” He didn't “de-construct his faith!”

➤ A friend of mine asked me awhile back, “How could James commend Job for his patience, did James actually read Job?” Good question! Job didn't really have a long fuse. He got sassy with God in his complaints. He is defensive and self-righteous. But twice we read that Job didn't charge God with wrong or sin with his lips, but he sure came right up to the edge!

So I get encouraged when I read James saying that God regards Job as an example for us! He wasn't perfect: my goodness, he wished he'd never been born. He wished his friends would shut up. The flame of his faith flickered – but it never went out. And because of that, he lived to see the outcome—

- V.11: You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

How does Job end? After suffering horrendously, losing his children, and everything he owned, and never understanding why – how does the story end?

- Job 42:10 <sup>10</sup>And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.
- Job 42:12–13 <sup>12</sup>And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. <sup>13</sup>He had also seven sons and three daughters.

God is compassionate and merciful to His children, amen? So there is a happy ending to every story – let’s close in prayer! Is that the lesson here? We know that’s not true.

Job saw God’s good purpose in all his suffering *before* God restored everything he had lost. It happened after God set Job straight in ch.38-41 by revealing Himself as Creator and Lord. This is was Job’s response—

- Job 42:5–6 <sup>5</sup>I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; <sup>6</sup>therefore I despise myself, and repent (but the better translation is, “am comforted”) in dust and ashes.”
- Now get this: while he was still covered head to toe with boils, still grieving the loss of his children – Job was *comforted*, not because God gave him reasons or explanations, but because he received a vision of God Himself. And that was enough for Job. That was “*the purpose of the Lord*” . . . now he knew that even in his suffering, “*the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*”

And *then* God restored all that Job had lost. the fortunes of Job. God never promised to unveil all the reasons for suffering and injustice, but He promises to give His children *Himself* in their suffering.

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So be patient until Jesus returns. Peter exhorts us: <sup>13</sup>*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

And know that as our world descends into chaos, and evil and injustice gets worse by the day, keep looking at the cross!

Because, when we look at the cross, we know that it won’t always be like this: At the cross, Jesus’ defeated Satan, and all evil, once and for all. And when He rose from the dead, a new age broke into this present evil age. It guaranteed that a new world is coming, “*in which righteousness dwells,*” as Peter said. Jesus is making all things new! And at His return, His people will be raised in glory, to live with Him forever. No more tears, no more sickness, no more grief or sorrow – everything sad will become untrue. He will restore the years the locusts have eaten.



- And our peace and joy will never be threatened because every last vestige of evil will be wiped out of the universe – once and for all. Along with all evil people. The cross shouts out that it's all going to happen when Jesus returns to culminate what He began 2,000 ago.

So we can be patient for that day, can't we? We can stand some aches and pain, and clouds and rain. And we can show the world that we have a glorious Savior and coming King – and He can be their Savior and King too.

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Most of you have heard of Joni Eareckson-Tada who was paralyzed from the neck down in a diving accident when she was 17. She is now 72, and she has had a lifetime of ministry to handicapped folks. She is one of the most joyful people you could ever meet because for all of those years, she has been patiently waiting for the next life. She wrote a song years ago—

*Though I spend my mortal lifetime in this chair, I refuse to waste it living in despair.  
And though others may receive Gifts of healing, I believe  
That He has given me a gift beyond compare....*

*For heaven is nearer to me, And at times it is all I can see.  
Sweet music I hear Coming down to my ear;  
And I know that it's playing for me.*

*For I am Christ the Savior's own bride, And redeemed I shall stand by His side.  
He will say, "Shall we dance?" And our endless romance  
Will be worth all the tears I have cried.*