

XXII. James in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel Life According to James
“True Religion and Perseverance”

James 5:7–11

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June 1, 2014 – Morning Sermon

This is our 22nd study in the book of James. We are in the homestretch in James 5:7-11. I'd like to James 1:12 which is a theme verse from James that gets explained, developed and expounded from our text in this study. This verse has set the entire course of study of our book of James. James 1:12 *says [12] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

We are just about to conclude our journey with Pastor James in this book of James in which a pastor has attempted to be faithful to bring to us Gospel wisdom that is necessary to us to live a Gospel life. He is talking to a Christian, not living in a Genesis 1 world but a Genesis 3 world that is cursed by sin and face the trials of life under the sovereign hand of God, who makes those trials tests in order to show us the Gospel wisdom we have and the Gospel wisdom we need so that we might live our Gospel life for Him. You have a Gospel foundation for life in Christ. You have a Gospel motivation because of the love of Christ and you desire to live a Gospel life so you need Gospel wisdom from above. That Gospel wisdom comes from the Lord through His Word in the trials of life.

James is not writing something that is foreign to him. He is writing for us but he is also writing for his church. He is the pastor of a mega church in Jerusalem with thousands of members and when James writes this book his church has been under trial. One of their deacons has been put to death. His name was Stephen. James, himself will be put to death fourteen years after he writes this book which was fourteen years after the ascension of Christ. The church will have undergone persecution so intense that many of them will have lost everything and have moved to Judea and Samaria from which the Lord planted the church at Antioch and the Gospel went to Judea and Samaria. Acts 6, 7 and 8 contained the record of the trials put upon the Jewish people. That trial would come to James himself where he would be thrown from the pinnacle where His blood brother Jesus had been tempted earlier.

Beyond that they will be spread throughout the world. As the Christians are being spread throughout the world from Jerusalem many times will go to places where the Gentiles will not only continue persecution but the Jewish community will persecute them because of them having received and affirmed Christ as the Messiah. So James is writing in a real life situation yet he is also writing for us because Jesus said “if they persecuted Me, how much more will they persecute you.” While this is written as a pastor who is trying to encourage his people who are going through the trials of life in a sin-cursed world and instruct God's people as to how God is sovereignly using this to develop them, he is also writing in a way that will bless us generations later, who will also undergo trials of life under the hand of a sovereign God to develop us as well.

James takes this verse in James 1:12 and now we're about to see it explained. James tells us that when we go through the trials of life they will become tests and where there are tests then God is at work in your life. To the true believer those tests will be evidence by perseverance. Notice that Christians are not perfect but they do persevere. Our perseverance and obedience will be uneven. It will not always be consistent but it will be present. There will always be fruit in the life of a Christian and there will be perseverance to the end. That's why the Bible says in Matthew 24:13, [13] *But the one who endures (perseveres) to the end will be saved.* Our perseverance does not save us. This is the mark of those who are being saved by God's preserving grace.

So I need to know how through Gospel wisdom can I obtain this glorious, blessed Gospel life of perseverance? How is it granted to us? I know that I will receive the crown of life because of Christ who saved me, preserves me and marks me out with perseverance. I know the evidence is steadfastness and perseverance. I know that is the result of loving Him because He first loved me. It is a Gospel blessing that comes to my life. How do we develop this? James finishes the epistle by explaining with clarity what he initiated in James 1:12 and you find it in James 5:7-11. I want you to see James' blueprint for developing Gospel delivered perseverance in the life of a Christian.

Before we look at this passage, as I go through this you will hear the words of perseverance, steadfastness, patience and you'll hear that seven times in this text. As these are affirmed in this text James, led by the Holy Spirit, will use three Greek words. These Greek words are interdependent and interrelated. He will use the Greek words, *makrothumia*, *stérizó*, and *hupomeno*. Those are three key words that are translated patience, steadfastness and perseverance and they will show up in this passage. Secondly, he will relate our perseverance to the second coming of Christ three times in the text. Three times he will explicitly identify who he is talking to as those who embrace perseverance to the end, even under the trials of life in a sin-cursed world. He calls us 'brothers' and that would include the 'sisters' in the Lord as well. There is three point everything all over this text.

The blueprint for developing Gospel delivered lifestyle Christian perseverance is laid out for us with three layers that he builds like a course of bricks, laid one on top of the other. The first layer is an admonition with a duration and an illustration and that is found in James 5:7. The duration tells us how long the admonition is to be in place and he'll give us an illustration. The second layer is an admonition with a motivation and an expectation which is found in James 5:8. The third layer is an admonition with a realization and two illustrations which is found in James 5:9-11. So let's start with the first layer.

James 5:7 says [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.* The admonition here is for those of us under trial and we're to be patient. This is the first Greek word he uses and that is *makrothumia*. It is the word for patience. It is articulating the patience of a waiting life. It is a passive virtue of waiting and it's not the waiting of 'I'll grin and bear it' or the waiting of apathy. It is a waiting that is characterized by the farmer and it's a waiting with a confident expectation of what the future holds and anticipation. So in the trials of life the believer who perseveres initially, foundationally waits in the midst of those trials with a confident

expectation and anticipation of what the Lord is doing in it and what He'll do through it in our lives.

Now how long am I to wait in these trials of life? What's the duration? The answer is seemingly endless but actually there is an end. He says, *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.* There is a duration of patience and trials and they all have an expiration date. I don't know that date and you don't know that date but I can tell you when I'll not need patience and there will be no trials. It is when Christ returns. When Christ returns the day of patience is over because there will be no more trials of life and no sin-cursed world. There will be a new heavens and a new earth.

When the Bible talks about the second coming the Bible uses three different Greek words to identify the second coming. *Epiphaneia* is one of those Greek words which would be used for a bright sunrise, the outburst of a sunrise. It is affirming the suddenness of the coming of Christ and there will be a glorious revelation of His majesty and glory and every eye shall see Him. A second Greek word used is *Apokalupsis* which refers to the catastrophic nature yet the glorious dynamic of His coming. It refurbishes and renovates everything. The old passes away and the new comes. Satan is cast into hell and then there is a clear line of demarcation between the believers and unbelievers. It is an apocalyptic moment. The third Greek word is *Parousia* which is used 15 times in the Bible to refer to the second coming of Christ and two times its used in this text in James. This word is developed from the Greek and Roman culture of that day and it was used to describe a triumphant king personally arriving to announce his victory to his beleaguered people. There were no ambassadors sent here but the king came personally.

You can obviously see the implications of this, can't you? The king came and won the victory and now He has ascended in which we rejoice in the ascension of Jesus Christ. As He ascends into heaven He now sends ambassadors. Who are the ambassadors? If you're a Christian, you are an ambassador of Jesus Christ to announce to the world the victory of the King but there is coming a day when the triumphant King shall come personally. He shall come in consummation in victory for His people and in judgment and condemnation for all who are apart from Him. In other words, he has an admonition for us to be patient, a confident expectation with anticipation until Christ comes and when He comes our confidence and patience will have been fulfilled in Christ and the trials of life will have been removed.

What's the illustration that James gives here? The illustration is one of a farmer. There is a hard working farmer that does the work in order to plant the crop. After the crop has been put in the hard working farmer now wants to be a hard working harvester but something has to happen in-between. That is the early and the latter rains. In that day in the land of Israel, the early rains came in the Fall and the later rains came in the Spring, then the crops grew in the harvest.

Christ is the farmer. He has done the work of securing the harvest. Now the nourishing, nurturing, developing former and latter rains are falling and the crop is being germinated and nourished. Notice the language in the text. Then the precious fruit will come forth and the Farmer becomes the harvester. You are the fruit. You are being nourished and developed in this day of adversity where God's Spirit and God's Word is maturing you. When the Lord returns He will bring in a harvest of a bumper crop of mature believers who have been brought to life and maturity in Christ and have been

brought to the majesty of the grace of God and to display it in Jesus Christ. So we have looked at layer one.

Now let's look at the second layer that is the admonition with a motivation and an expectation. James 5:8 says [8] *You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (is near)*. Now he tells us to be patient and gives us the second word, *stérizó* which is translated in the Bible as to stand firm or establish. Your patience is no longer a passiveness even though you're waiting in the trials of life but no added to it is this call that by God's grace take hold of the means of grace and then establish or strengthen your heart. It means to set firm, secure, fix, focus and strengthen your heart. In the day of trial the grace of God is used to strengthen your heart in these days.

The word *stérizó* is used in your Bible in a number of places and I'll give you two places because it's not always translated strengthen or establish. In Luke 9 it says that Jesus declared to His disciples that He would go to Jerusalem, die, be buried, and raised in three days. Then, it says in Luke 9:51, [51] *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem*. It is this steely resolve to go to what He had been called to accomplish. To the end He would finish the course. He would persevere to the end.

Another place you'll find the Greek word *stérizó* is Ephesians 6. In this passage it talks about us being in a spiritual war and it says three different times, *stérizó*, stand firm. Put on the armor of God and stand firm in the day of adversity. By the grace of God and the glory of God, stand firm in and for the Lord. So the admonition is to establish your hearts and the patience that God has called you to. Fix, fasten, focus and secure your heart. It is presumed that you're a Christian and you have a new heart. If you don't have a new heart you can't fix it, focus it, establish it or strengthen it. The new heart allows you to come to Christ and when you come to Christ that heart was made by God to be fixed on and focused upon Jesus Christ. It is to be focused on something very specific in Christ. In the text it says *Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (is near)*. So the motivation is to establish your heart for the coming of the Lord.

What is the expectation? You focus, fasten, strengthen and establish your heart on Christ who is coming again soon, which is the expectation. This could be my last sermon. This could be mine and your last day. He is coming and it may be in the morning or at noon but it will be soon. Christ is coming soon so redeem the time. So we have gone over two layers.

Here is the third layer of the Gospel gift of perseverance in the Christian life. James 5:9-11 says [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*.

The third admonition is not to grumble. We are back to the unbridled tongue and bridling the tongue by grace. James keeps coming back to the tongue that is directly fastened to the heart because the heart of the problem is the problem with the heart. If the heart is established then by God's grace we don't grumble but we rejoice in the Lord. Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for your life in Christ Jesus (I

Thessalonians 5:18). You might be thinking ‘why did James go to grumbling here for what does that have to do with Christian perseverance.’

You live in a sin-cursed world and that means you’ll meet with adversity, challenges, discouragement, disappointments and all kinds of things. People that you depend upon will not be dependable. What you expect will not come through. We get up in the morning where the father goes one way, the mother goes another way and the children go still another way. As the father is at his job he encounters various things that go wrong on the job. The mother goes her way and she also encounters various things that go wrong and didn’t work out. Beyond that the children go to school and somebody bullies them and they encounter things that go wrong. What happens when everybody gets home in the family? Usually what happens is when things didn’t go well during the day you come home and kick the cat or you say things at home you couldn’t say on the job. The mother, father and children begin to ventilate, when actually what they all need is encouragement.

The reason James tells us not to grumble is because you live in a sin-cursed world with all kinds of discouragements and disappointments and the natural default is to grumble. Grumbling is the luxury of trying to write a self-exalting autobiography and you don’t care what happens to others. It’s the same word that is used when the Israelites came out of Egypt. God’s hand had delivered them but trials came in the wilderness so they began to grumble. Grumble means an incessant moaning, a continuous murmuring. Grumbling is really a means of self-absorption that things didn’t really go the way you wanted and so you grumble to the next one you see but James tell us not to do it.

What do I do with my frustration? Take it to the Lord who is slow to anger, compassionate and can do something about it. Don’t take it to somebody else. All that your grumbling does is bring someone down while you seek to alleviate yourself. Our grumbling destroys others. So we don’t grumble, gossip or slander but rejoice in the Lord and give thanks. Boast in the Lord and bring your disappointments to Him and we bring His praise to one another. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear* (Ephesians 4:29). In the family of God we need encouragement and praise that is devoted to the majesty of our God and not grumbling. So we are not to grumble in the trails of life and in our frustration and irritability we are to go to the Lord with confident expectation and know that the Lord is at work strengthening our hearts so that our words reflect the strength of grace in our heart and we begin to use words that glorify the Lord and encourage one another.

What is the realization? This is the third reference to the second coming but notice he says that the Judge is standing at the door. In other words, Jesus is at the door. It’s like when we’re talking about someone and they are just standing outside the door, “Shhhh, they are outside the door!” or somebody you can’t wait to see is outside the door. That’s the way we look at it. My Savior is at the door and He is about to open it. I want the pattern of my speech to be honoring to Him. I do not want the pattern of speech that identifies those whom the Judge is going to condemn. Check Romans 1, II Corinthians and you’ll see the marks of unbelief are grumbling. I want the pattern of speech growing in my life those whom He comes to bring home to be with Him and He is at the door about to open it.

Finally James gives us two illustrations here. James 5:10-11 says [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.* They are going to hate and despise you but you persevere with steadfastness for Me. Stay the course. Jeremiah and Isaiah, they will not listen to you. Ezekiel, they will declare you as one they do not want to be around or listen to. Don't expect to get a raise from My people but you stay faithful to the end.

Here is another illustration, Job. Job was steadfast to the end. When you read Job you can see all kinds of Gospel wisdom and his steadfastness. Job says, 'Though He slay me yet I will serve Him. Though my flesh be destroyed I will serve Him, yet in my flesh I yet see him.' There are all kinds of text that declare Job's confidence in the Lord even under the trials of a sovereign God who has allowed Satan to be at work against him and in his life. Everything had been taken from him, even his health. The only thing around were his friends and his wife and they became part of the trials but he stayed the course to the end.

You know how it came out for them. They didn't know how it would end for them. They didn't know they would be quoted thousands of years later. They didn't know how their words would change lives. Isaiah didn't know we'd be using his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit as a confessional. They just knew the Lord had called them and sent them and they would stay the course even though those whom they ministered to and cared for would reject and despise them. So James gives us two examples here and you have the privilege to be on the other side to see the mercy and compassion of the Lord.

Here is the takeaway. In the midst of the trials of life the authentic Christian perseveres with both patience and steadfastness because of a heart established in the Gospel wisdom. The steadfastness (*hupomeno*) in life built upon the strength (*stérizó*), and patience (*makrothumia*) where you're waiting on the coming King, are all put together. The Christian perseveres with patience that is expectant, with steadfastness that is resolute, and it is because of a new heart that has been saturated with Gospel wisdom in order to live life for the Lord.

What kind of saturation? The first thing is that it is saturated with the victory of Christ's first coming. He came and humbled Himself. He didn't come to bring judgment but to bear judgment so that you could have a new heart, a new record, a new family, a new home and a new life. He came so that you could love Him. He came because He first loved you. Because of what He has done your King has triumphed and won the victory and that's foundational. Your heart is fixed on that Christ-given victory in His first coming.

That means you move to the triumph of His second coming. I don't know when His second coming will be and I am not interested in anything that will tell me this date. The Bible says that no man knows the date of His second coming. There are two things that have to happen. We have to reclaim teaching on the second coming of Christ. It is crucial for the steadfastness of the believer in life. Three times He said that you are to look to the coming of Christ. When we do teach on the second coming we tend to get off track. One preacher said in his exotic speculation of Revelation that the locust were black helicopters from Russia, how does that help you in steadfastness?

Here is what the Bible teaches. Jesus is coming soon. His coming will be sudden. Have you ever been looking out a window when a storm is happening and all of a sudden you see lightning? That's the way He'll come. He will take the unbelieving world by surprise. They won't be expecting it and it will be business as usual. God's people don't know the date, nor are they worried about the date and they're not trying to fix a date because they know they can't but they are looking for the season that marks out that He is coming. He is coming soon and when He comes He will bring the consummation and the victory He has purchased. He will bring His people to maturity with no more patience, trials, sin, death, grave or none of that. There will be a new heavens and a new earth with no sin and no ability to sin. That is what you focus on in the second coming of Christ. That is why the believer says in the book of Revelation "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." So you rest in the victory of His first coming and you look with anticipation to the consummation of His second coming.

Then he says this kind of perseverance needs a grumble free zone of the family of God. There is no grumbling. I have the privilege to pastor this church and I am amazed at the generosity of your lives and your speech and I love you, not that we're all perfect for I know we all have things to deal with but I have no issue here. I am just pleading with you that in this place, this church will be a death trap for sin and will be a haven of encouragement in life and words for sinners that are saved by grace. What if there is sin? The Bible tells us how to deal with sin and aught and dealing with these is not by grumbling. Grumbling is merely the luxury of self-absorption. By God's grace, we are going to be patient and say 'no' to self-protection, be establishing your heart for steadfastness to say 'no' to self-pity in the trials of life and then don't grumble to say 'no' to self-absorption at the expense of discouraging other people with my grumbling words. No, there will be no place for it. In place of it will be this glorious praise to God.

So there is this victory of His first coming and the triumph of His second coming and that's the expiration date for sin and all of its consequences. There is the environment of a family and a "grumble free" zone where we are encouraging one another in the Lord and finally there is the joy of revealing the Lord's compassion and mercy in the trials of life. God is doing something. God never says all things are good but all things are working together for good so that when the world sees us in the trials of life they see a reflection of God's compassion and mercy in our perseverance.

The reason we can reflect His compassion and mercy as we're growing in grace with imperfect obedience but persistence perseverance, is because we've seen the Lord's compassion and mercy. We saw it in the prophets. They had no idea it was going to happen but look what happened with them. See what happened with Job. He had no idea how his life was going to end but he persevered and look what happened to him. You have seen it in your life.

Tom Cheely, from heaven, just about killed me these last two weeks fulfilling the schedule he had in Taiwan and Japan. There were things that happened that I cannot wait to tell you about. There were so many open doors and I cannot help but think how much joy Tom would have knowing what happened the last two weeks but Tom already knows it. I do want to tell you about a blessing I experienced while I was there. On the way to the airport I stopped by to see an older man and had the privilege to meet the grandson of this man. This man, the father, was a leader in the church during WWII in Japan. During this time, the Emperor said to the church in the opening days of WWII,

“The church can worship as long as you bow to the Emperor.” This sounds like what happened to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Some Christians said they didn’t believe in this but they still did it anyway so they wouldn’t get killed.

This father wouldn’t do it. He was arrested and this was in 1941. He wasn’t put in jail but he was put in the basement of a jail. His family was so discouraged and even his son that is now a great leader, an elder, in the church in Japan said “My dad was so faithful to the Lord and look what the Lord allowed of him.” His father was in a dungeon of a jail and all he had been was faithful to the Lord. His dad said to him and his family “Praise the Lord, don’t get discouraged. Don’t grumble.” That jail was in Hiroshima. The father actually saw the atomic bomb dropping. The bomb hit and exploded and he saw the mushroom cloud that came after it hit the ground. The tremor and the shockwaves blew down every building and all the captors that had kept him and tortured him for three years were consumed in a moment. He walked out unharmed to live for the next 35 years and lead the church of Jesus Christ in his hometown.

We have seen the mercy and compassion of the Lord but go beyond Hiroshima. Go to the cross for there was the trial of life and there you saw the Savior who would not come down but stayed there to win the victory and in that moment the Author and Perfector of your faith who for the joy set before Him, endured to the end the cross and now has sat down in victory. You are the precious fruit of His grace and mercy. Be patient. Strengthen your hearts in Christ. Anticipate His coming and then call upon Him that by His grace there would not be grumbling. We will go to Him with all of our questions but before this world they will hear the praise of the Lord and God’s people will hear the encouraging word from the Lord to us in this life that by God’s grace His people will remain steadfast until the end, receiving from the Savior the crown of life to all who love Him because He first loved us. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for your grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. Thank You O God that we might give You praise, glory and honor and exalt You in life. We confess that we are weak. We desperately need Your preserving grace to persevere. Now, Father, thank You for this blueprint given by Pastor James, in the midst of the trials of his own congregation, and the fact that he would soon lose his own life for Christ that we would wait with confident expectation and patience and strengthen our hearts by grace. Then our lips would give You praise and we would not, by Your grace, grumble. Our concerns we would bring to You from our secret closet, for You alone are slow to anger, compassionate and merciful and can allay all of our fears that we might speak of the majesty of Christ and live unto the King who came and saved us, who now intercedes for us and is coming soon. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, Amen.