

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES

Sermon #11

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

JAMES 5:7-11

Is patience difficult for you? A man in Los Angeles, California was arrested for negligent discharge of a weapon after shooting his toilet bowl five times with a 38 caliber handgun. He claims that he just got upset. He couldn't take it any longer. His daughter had flushed a hairbrush earlier in the day and clogged the pipes. So he shot the offending toilet. I have no word on the toilet's condition, but the man's patience was long gone.

Someone has said,

Patience is a virtue,

Possess it if you can.

Found seldom in a woman,

Never in a man.

“Perhaps you can relate this story. “Oneday a man was to meet his wife downtown and spend some time shopping with her. He waited patiently for 15 minutes. Then he waited impatiently for 15 minutes more.

After that, he became angry. Seeing one of those photograph booths nearby (the kind that accepts coins into a slot and takes four shots while you pose on a small bench), he had an idea. He assumed the most ferocious expression he could manage, which wasn't difficult under the circumstances, and in a few moments he was holding four small prints that shocked even him!

He wrote his wife's name on the back of the photographs and handed them to a clerk behind the desk. *“If you see a small, dark lady with brown eyes and an apologetic expression, apparently looking for someone, would you please give her this?”* he said.

He then returned to his office content that, if a picture is worth a thousand words, then four photos must be a full-blown lecture! His wife saved those pictures. She carries them in her purse now. Shows them to anyone who asks if she is married.” [Sermon Illustrator. Patience – “Wait Training” www.sermonillustrator.org]

How are you with patience? It seems that there is always something to try our patience. Having to wait is one of those things. We wait on traffic and we wait in lines. We wait to hear about a new job.

We wait to complete school or to retire. We wait to grow up or for maturity in a child. We wait for a decision to be made. We wait for someone to change his or her mind.

Every day presents plenty of occasions for training in patience. We can resent waiting, accept it or even get good at it! But one thing is certain - we cannot avoid it.

Perhaps we can hear the Lord speak to us about the possibilities for patience in our own lives today, that is, if we are not in too much of a hurry to get out of here. We have all heard the expression; I need patience — and I need it RIGHT NOW!!!

The story is "told that the great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was known for his calmness and poise. His intimate friends, however, knew that he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him pacing the floor like a caged lion. 'What is the trouble, Dr. Brooks?' asked his friend. 'The trouble is,' replied Brooks, 'that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't.'" [David Jeremiah. Turning Toward Integrity. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1993.) p. 166.]

Haven't we felt the same way many times? Patience is what James addresses in our text. Turn with me now to James 5:7,

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. (8) You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (9) Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (10) My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. (11) Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended* by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

James here addresses the problems that we all face when problems overwhelm us, (1) We are tempted to Lose Patience, (2) We are tempted to Lose Perspective, and (3) We are tempted to Blame Others.

First, When We Are Tempted To Lose Patience – Remember It Will Be Worth the Wait! 5:7-8a

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. (8) You also be patient....."

James sets the theme for the whole section with this command he gives right up front. In fact he states it twice, once in verse seven, and once in verse eight. He begins verse seven with this command and the word "*therefore*" or "so then." The people to whom James is writing were experiencing tremendous difficulty and persecution. As we learned in the first six verses of James 5, the wicked rich were oppressing and persecuting Christians, but their condemnation is coming... therefore, James says, "*be patient.*" Be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others. This appears to be perfect advice for what his audience is going through, doesn't it?

We know this passage is addressed to believers because James uses the term brethren four times (vv. 7, 9, 10, 12). The reason is that the kind of patience to which James is referring can only be achieved by a person whose life is connected to God.

“Be patient” (*makrothumia*) in Greek means to be “long tempered” The word translated patience comes to us from the combination of two Greek words (*makros*) which means “far away” and (*thumos*) which means “anger, heat or rage.” This is not a passive resignation but an attitude of self-restraint that enables one to refrain from hasty retaliation in the face of provocation.

Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is a characteristic of being born again. As such it is one of those things that set the believer apart from the world. But patience is not one of those things that comes easily. There is a price to pay for patience. The easy road leads us to impatience

We have all experienced the hurt of mistreatment and misunderstanding. Such hurts come in a variety of forms; intolerable work situations, domestic conflicts, difficult relatives, individuals who take advantage of us, friends (so called) who turn against us, neighbors who believe false things about us and dozens of other hurtful circumstances. Our natural tendency is to retaliate, to return evil for evil, to get even, or to hold a grudge and become bitter. But there is a better way to respond to such hurtful circumstances and James as pastor of the church of Jerusalem reveals this to his congregation.

God is calling the Christian to overcome our natural reaction with a supernatural response. We find out what that response is from Peter (1 Peter 2:18-20). “Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. (19) For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. (20) For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.” Anyone can endure when things are going well. And enduring suffering as a result of sin is nothing extraordinary. However enduring unfair treatment with patience is particularly noteworthy. When we respond in such a supernatural way, God is pleased. Peter twice in this passage states that “*this finds favor with God.*” “*The word for “favor” in the Greek is charis, the same word translated grace. God considers patient endurance of injustice grace, something that is commendable because it is beyond the ordinary human response.*” [Charles Swindoll. James: Practical and Authentic Living. (Fullerton, Calif., Insight for Living, 1991). p. 170.]

Paul reveals that the incentive to patience is “*the coming of the Lord*” - our incentive for patience is to be in anticipation of the return of the Lord. The word used here for “*coming*” is (*parousia*), which actually is the Greek word for “presence” or “advent.” we look forward to His Second Advent, an event that became known simply as, “*The Parousia.*” It was spoken about as such in Matthew 24:3, and Paul refers to it in the same way in 2 Thessalonians 2:1. James is exhorting us as Christians to wait patiently until Christ returns.

Three times James reminds us of the coming of the Lord (vv, 7, 8, & 9). This is the “blessed hope” of the Christian (Titus 2:13).

James also gives a classic illustration of patience when he says, “see how the farmer waits” - the farmer is patient because the value of the harvest justifies the wait. When the seed is planted and everything is done in the initial stage, he doesn’t go off and retire. He is working in another area of the farm. While we are waiting for the Lord’s coming, we are not exhorted to put on white robes and sit on

the roof of the church and wait for Him. We are to be occupied. We should be working in the church and seeking to win people to Jesus

“Some of the greatest missionaries of history devotedly spread the seed of God's Word and yet had to wait long periods before seeing the fruit of their efforts. William Carey, for example, labored 7 years before the first Hindu convert was brought to Christ in Burma. In western Africa, it was 14 years before one convert was received into the

Christian church. In New Zealand, it took 9 years; and in Tahiti, it was 16 years before the first harvest of souls began.

The word “*patience*,” means to endure under. You don’t really need patience when everything around you is going right. You need it when life is hard on you. Suffering and patience seem to go hand in hand. As a matter of fact, the Bible talks about tribulation working patience in us.

James gives the reader two examples of why we should have patience, first there is the example of the Old Testament prophets (v. 10). They have given an example that you will need patience when you are mistreated. “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.”

Jesus explained the plight of the prophets in the parable of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-16). The prophets amidst difficult circumstances provide a challenging example of suffering and patience.

Here is a reminder that Scripture says that “all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12) Although God honored the prophets by using them this did not guarantee their escaping persecution by the world. The implication is that if they did not escaping suffering why should we expect to?

Secondly we have the example of the Patriarch Job (v. 11) You need patience when you don’t know why. “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” Job is a wonderful example of endurance. In the face of all his unexplained suffering he is a memorable model of endurance under tremendous testing (Job 1:21, 2:10, 16:9-21, 19:13-27)

Job was blessed above every other man of his day. He was prosperous and had a wonderful family. It seemed he had everything his heart desired. Then suddenly came calamity and devastation. He lost all of his property, his possessions and his family, and his health. The only things he had left were his wife and his own life. The devil didn’t kill his wife because he knew he could use her later.

Job did not understand what was happening or why but in knew his life was in God’s hands. Even in his confusion he cried out to the Lord.

Job is a wonderful source of encouragement. Job knew his life was in God’s hands but didn’t understand what was happening or why. He cries out in confusion to the Lord. It was the outcome (“end of the Lord - *telos*) that vindicated Job.(Job 42:10, 12, 16-17)

When We Are Tempted To Lose Patience – Remember It Will Be Worth the Wait and....

Secondly, When We Are Tempted To Lose Perspective – Strength Your Relationship With the Lord. (5:8b)

In the second portion of verse eight James utters another command, “.... establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

He says that instead of feeling agitated and shaken up by the experience of oppression we are to develop an inner sense of stability. We are told in verse eight to “establish” or strengthen our hearts, this is a charge to us as patiently waiting Christians to firmly establish our hearts in God’s Word and truth and strengthen ourselves against the sin and temptation and trials of the world. Strengthening your heart has to do with supporting something that is heavy. When you have been done wrong your heart is heavy.

To strengthen our hearts is to strengthen our relationship with the Lord. I want to point out three things you can do. Strengthening our hearts requires prayer. Strengthening our hearts requires attention to the Scripture. And here’s the one we often neglect, strengthening our heart requires fellowship with other Christians. I don’t mean just church attendance. The purpose of fellowship with other Christians is the building up of one another.

When We Are Tempted To Lose Perspective – Strength Your Relationship With the Lord and...

Third, When We Are Tempted To Blame Others – Grumbling will not help! (5:9) “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”

Impatience with our circumstances leads to impatience with God, which in turn leads to impatience with God’s people. What do we usually do when we begin to feel the heat? We complain to anyone who will listen! We lash out at each other because of the pressure that we are feeling.

In verse nine Paul issues another command, “grumble not” – this is literally a command to stop grumbling.

Apparently this is an internal problem for he says, “one against another, Brethren.” This addresses the human tendency when subjected to oppression and injustice to lash out at those nearest them.

“To walk in love the saints above,

will be a wondrous glory;

But to walk below with the folks we know,

well that is another story.”

Paul says this behavior must be abandoned – “lest ye be condemned.” Imminent judgment should remind the Christian, that Jesus has prohibited believers from judging one another for in (Luke 6:37) we read, “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Paul speaks of the believers presence at the judgment seat in (2 Cor. 5:10) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Judging one another is a bad idea considering the nearness of the heavenly judge. He is "before the door" literally facing the door and ready to push it open.

James says, "*Look Christ may return at any time, he is literally standing at the door. He may open the door at any minute and walk in, so he had better find you waiting patiently, standing firm and not grumbling against Him or one another, or else you will be judged!*"

To avoid grumbling to others take this actions first -

- Be careful to think first
- Be careful to pray first.
- Be careful to show love (1 Cor 13:4)
- Be careful to find out the facts.
- Be careful to consider our example.
- Be careful to remember our Obligation.

"forgive as we have been forgiven"

Conclusion

First, When We Are Tempted To Lose Patience – Remember It Will Be Worth the Wait and....

Secondly, When We Are Tempted To Lose Perspective – Strength Your Relationship With the Lord.

Third, When We Are Tempted To Blame Others – Grumbling Will Not Help! (5:9)