

PATIENT ENDURANCE and TRUTHFUL SPEECH - James 5:7-12 Matthew 24; 1 Thessalonians, 4:13-17; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Job 1+2, 42:5; Mt 5:33-37

Sources: NIV Bible. **Commentaries:** Craig Blomberg/Mariam Kamell, Herb Kopp, Scot McKnight, J.A. Motyer, & David P. Nystrom, & N.T. Wright.

INTRO <slide1>

50 Yr old townhouse: ... And its a beautiful spot for our young family! And when you live in an older place there are always some surprises. There is a little more gunk hiding in places you didn't originally see, and the walls and doors are a little more crooked that you originally thought as you take a closer look ...reno! And there is plenty of changes and work that can be done to make the place better! And thats more or less a little like life! The older I get and the more I interact with people the more I realize the beauty and yet complexity of humanity. And unfortunately often the brokenness of human life and relationships! Humanity as a whole needs help and there is a long ways to go before this world is a better place for way too many people!

But this little book called James, this letter to the Christian church is written to point the Jesus follower in the right direction! One of the most common words for **sin** in the NT is the Greek word "**Hamartia**" and it simply means "missing the mark." <slide2> Marksmanship metaphor!
• **FINGER ROCKET DEMONSTRATION:** the language that is 'popping up!' And James is trying to get us back on target!

And if you have been following with us you can see that James isn't very suddle in the way he writes. The man would NOT make a very good Canadian. He's too blunt! Not afraid to offend. He doesn't beat around the bush but gets straight to he point and hits it head on! **One pastor** says the book of James is a beautifully crafted punch in the gut for those who want to follow Jesus! And maybe we need a little more of this in our culture! So lets get into it! Turn with me to James 5:7-12 [page 979 in the blue pew Bibles].

Last week pastor Dave preached on the first part of James 5 that was speaking to the rich who oppressed the poor to get rich. This passage today turns its attention from the rich to the poor, from the evil oppressors to the righteous oppressed, from presumption to patience!

READ (163 words) JAMES 5:7-12 <slide3>

We are going to walk through this passage a verse or two at a time this morning and explore the main theme of patient endurance through a few different angles and end with truth speaking!

PRAY

Our two favourite words start off this passage: **Be Patient!** <slide4> *Ahhh, come now Jesus!* Do you ever notice when you realize that your impatience is rising and you pray for more patience the Lord immediately gives you an opportunity to try to have patience?! And patience is one of the nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit. You know the life-changing mind renewing transformation that happens as you walk with Jesus! Yet patience is so difficult. I mean, I have a hard time waiting 10 mins for dinner to be ready so I might grab a quick snack before! I'm pathetic! And that's perhaps a reading on my life or our culture of instant gratification. You can finance almost anything these days! We want stuff and things to happen instantly yet that is so often not a reality. And as James has said earlier at the beginning of chapter 4, you are coveting things and asking for them with selfish motives! What you should be patiently pursuing is a renewed life with God that is constantly growing and changing! Patience is a lifelong project and process!

Lets get back to James' **original audience**. He isn't calling 1st century Christians to be patient and save for a few months for that big screen TV! He calling them to be patient in their suffering, and persecution! This is a hard calling!

And Scripture is consistently calling its readers to **patience**.. so that's not so surprising but the **duration** is! **Until Jesus comes back!** So, in other words suffering will continue to be a part of life until Jesus returns! Not exactly a warm and fuzzy word, BUT to those who are enduring persecution or hardship (especially for their faith) the Lord's second coming is the reason not only for patient endurance but for joy! Yes remember back to chapter one, <slide5> James says "consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance... so that you may be mature and complete."

<slide 6> In **verse 7** James gives the **illustration of the farmer** waiting patiently for the land to yield its valuable, precious crops! In the first century there was very little the farmer could do to MAKE their crops grow.

They had to patiently wait and pray that the rain would come at the right time and that the crop would grow and produce!

Then in **verse 8** the call is to **model the farmer**, to be patient and to stand firm or to **strengthen your hearts** because the Lord's return is near! The return of Christ will be like the reward the farmer gets for his patience; a bountiful crop that sustains and blesses his family, yet Jesus' return will be so much more than that!

I want to take some time this morning and give a **quick synopsis** of what the Bible teaches about Jesus' return! <slide7> And a main dialogue for Christ's second coming is from Jesus himself who talks at length about his return in **Matthew 24**. Believing in Christ's 2nd coming can be difficult (its an out there idea) so *why should we believe Jesus' words about his second coming, other than the obvious that he is Jesus/God! Well, he also said numerous times before his death that he would rise again 3 days after! That was so unbelievable but it came true exactly as he said it would! Through the life death and resurrection of Jesus, his words are validated and trustworthy!* "We have, therefore, a sure foundation for this expectant faith. So this is what Jesus taught about his 2nd coming: (1) it would be preceded by **signs** (war and disaster) (Mt 24:3) (2) It will happen on a day which **cannot be known** in advance (24:36ff). and then, (3) when he returns, it will be as **vivid**, visible, and unmistakable as lightning which illuminates the whole sky (Mt 24:27). And (4) Those who are in Christ will be gathered forever into his presence, **transformed** in an instant! the apostle Paul tells us that we will have glorious new bodies and will have an unblemished holiness (1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; 1 Cor. 15:22).

This may be hard to believe but the Bible is clear on this point all over the NT! Commentator J.A. Motyer counted roughly 300 references to Jesus' return within the NT!

Jesus' second coming will be very different than his **first**: he will come in power and he is coming to judge the world and rid it of all evil and all those who oppose Him. **Then Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3** tell us that the current heavens and earth will be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness and the presence of God will fully dwell with no sign of suffering, sin, evil, or death! THIS IS THE SPLENDID HOPE TO WHICH THE SUFFERING CHURCH IS ABLE TO FIND JOY THROUGH HARDSHIP! The hope that we will see Jesus our Saviour face to face and

be re-united with lost loved ones who were in Christ! We have an amazing future as citizens of God's Kingdom!

I wonder, how often do you think about and deeply desire for the Lord's coming? <slide8> .. as I was preparing this week it struck me that I don't think about the glorious return and restoration of all things nearly enough! For the suffering and persecuted church this aspect of our faith is constantly on their minds and is perhaps the only thing that gets them through the day!

"A popular country song from **2008** by **Kenny Chesney** sings the line that everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to go now!"). Here on the west coast many of us have it pretty good, BUT the return of Jesus will fully usher in God's new kingdom and it will be far more amazing than anything we could possibly experience in this life. <slide9>
What level of **anticipation** and expectancy do you have for Jesus' return?! This is the moment that all Christians are waiting and longing for because nothing could possible be better!

The last thing to mention about the second coming this morning is the **timeline**. In verse 8 James said Jesus' return was '**near**.' <slide10>... Well, here we are 2000 years later and near is a potential, Jesus could return before this sermon is over ..

Or it could be in another 2000 years from now - we don't know! But we must remember that to the Lord a 1000 years are like a day (2 Peter 3:8). God's timeline verses our timeline is vastly different! CS Lewis gives us an interesting perspective with his Narnia series. When Peter, Edmond, and Susan come back from years of life lived in Narnia only a second has passed earthly time!

And in God's currency, **more time for us is merciful!** It allows us to get ready! <slide11> It allows for others to have a chance to hear and respond to the Gospel! **2 Pet 3:9 says**, The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some regard slowness, but is being patient toward you, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Let's move on to **verse 9**. Another few of our favourite words: **Don't grumble!** <slide12> No complaining, no whining! These Christians were grumbling against one another! Not good! Fighting or quarrelling usually

begins with complaining and grumbling and James wants to cut that off before it starts!

And **grumbling contradicts** and undermines the very patience that James is calling for! <slide13> Commentator R.J. Kowling **writes**, “patience is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate against a wrong, and steadfastness is the temperament which does not easily succumb under suffering.”

This is what we are called to or James says we will be **judged!**

Whoa, that's a stern warning but when the words that come out of our mouths break the unity of the church they rob the church of her purpose, witness and harvest!

Think about the **Israelites in the Sinai dessert**. <SLIDE14> The people of Israel had just been freed from Egypt and witnessed the amazing miraculous power of God, and then the moment they encountered hardship they grumbled against God and against their leaders and one another! Needless to say God wasn't too pleased and that entire generation ended up not actually seeing the promised land because of the behaviour they exhibited after being saved by God! May we at **NSAC** heed this warning and when we encounter hardship may we lean on Jesus and the church community to hold us up and get us through.

Then James tells us to look to the example of the prophets in **verses 10+11**

<slide15> **Which says, 10** Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. **11** As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. **The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.**

God calls us to patience in suffering. Look at the prophets, they had a privileged position in which they heard from God and spoke God's Word to the people. But they were not always protected against the strains of this life or against persecution! ***Their blessedness and trials went hand in hand.*** “**Jeremiah** was hunted down by his neighbours to stop him from preaching. If **Daniel** had not been exiled to Babylon we never would have heard of him or benefited from his ministry!” The Bible is full of stories of people who endured great hardship in the name of God. And one of the ultimate biblical examples is brought up in this passage: the life of **Job!**

Job was a righteous man who who was very wealthy. And in a short matter of time the Devil was allowed to kill his children, his servants, his livestock, and take his health! Yet nothing happened to his wife! *Now thats saying something right there isn't it? Hey Devil, Job's wife is right over there! ... hehehehe, I KNOW! Trust me, leave her, I know what I'm doing. hahaha!"*

And do you know what advice she gave him? Hey Job, why bother keeping your integrity? Why don't you just curse God and die!

But listen carefully to Job's response: "You are talking like a foolish woman! Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

Yet the text is clear that it is Satan who afflicts Job, and only because God allowed it. the Bible doesn't tell us why God allows it, but one thing is clear: **Suffering and hardship is not your fault—well maybe not all the time, we should not look for it! And Naturally, our instinct is to avoid suffering at all cost.**

We want our suffering to end as soon as it begins! But often we will need patience, endurance and God's comfort to make it through. The Bible tells us to **hold on**, In the end God WILL make things right!

And **in the mean time** God can turn our suffering into good in a way that only he could orchestrate! <slide16> "God often uses difficult circumstances to forge our patience and spiritual character. James is attempting to shift our attention from what is happening to us to what God is forming in us. **Our character is forged on the anvil of difficulty.**" God has used difficult circumstances **in my life** to help me understand him better, to draw me closer to him and I have watched him do it in other peoples lives too!

Back to **Job's** story. If you know the story, in the end he was blessed even more than he was before he lost everything: But "the blessedness which came to him eventually was not just because he was blessed with material possessions. <slide17> The objective wasn't more material things: But the objective above all, was the enrichment of knowing and trusting God more fully." !!!! 183

Listen to **Job's confession**: "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you!" Job 42:5

So what will your **response** be to pain and suffering? In the end there really two options: you can curse God and walk away, or you can run to him. <slide 18> At the end of verse 11 James tells us to Remember the Lord, the One who is compassionate and full of mercy!"

One of the great truths that sets Christianity apart is this: If there is anyone who understands pain, suffering, and loss, it is the Lord Jesus Christ! He saw lots of pain during his short lifetime. One of his close friends Lazarus, died. And even though Jesus knew he was going to bring him back to life he still wept for him and with those who were mourning! He was betrayed by one of his closest friends, rejected by another, condemned by his own people, whom he had spent 3 years serving, blessing, and teaching. Then, he was brutally beaten and murdered. Jesus knows pain. He understands where you are at! And he isn't afraid to let you tell him about it. Ultimately, Jesus can and has shouldered our pain. Let us bring our hurts to him, the One who is FULL of compassion and mercy as we patiently wait for his glorious return!

Ok, we have one more verse! <slide19> ***12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.***

One of the big themes in James is the problem of speech! And in this verse James says almost the same thing as Jesus does in Mt 5:33-37 in the famous sermon on the Mt. <slide20>

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’

34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

The strong prohibition and judgment from both these passages flows out of the OT idea that truthfulness is a mark of the people of God (Ex 20:16)!

Lying is attempting to adjust reality so something will be perceived differently than what it truly is.” In the community of faith, the truth should be spoken in love and with openness in all circumstances.

Our speech can bring honour or dishonour to God or others, but we are called to be people whose word is trustworthy! We shouldn't need to add

anything to our speech to tell people we are telling the truth. James is calling us to live, speak, and act with integrity in all we do.

Herod..

Herod: At his big birthday bash the daughter of Herodias (the lady whom he shouldn't have been with according to John the Baptist) danced for the party and pleased him so much that he promised on oath that he would give her whatever she asked for. This misjudgment on Herod's part led to a further awful act: the beheading of John the Baptist!

Job was encouraged to curse God but he didn't!

The apostle **Peter** began to curse and swear and insisting that he did not know Jesus. That should make us pause and consider the words that come out of our mouths!"

An interesting thought for me is that James says, ABOVE ALL DO NOT SWEAR! Above all. Speech is so important! How often do you hear others, maybe yourself saying, "I swear to God ... If I am lying right now may God curse me Using God's name lightly is not a good idea, God hears it all! Taking Oaths are unnecessary and can force us into behaviour that does not glorify God! <slide21>

"Following Jesus is supposed to be the path to a genuine human existence; and genuine human lifeline should issue in clear, straight, honest speaking" (Wright, 40). I tell our teenagers often, an easy way for us to stand out in our culture is by not swearing, not using God's name inappropriately, not making dirty jokes, and telling the truth!

Personal integrity and truthfulness enhance our **witness** of Jesus! If we really took this to heart, **how would our lives be enriched?** What would it do for your walk with Jesus, your marriage, friendships, work relationships, etc). May we take up this challenge in lives to draw close to God through all circumstances without grumbling or complaining. And may we use our words wisely, our time here is short, so let us always simply speak the truth in love!

PRAY

Lord Jesus, I pray that our lives would line up more and more with your will. That we would live out the genuine human lives that you have created

us to live! God continue to transform us. Give us patient endurance to withstand the hardships that come our way. Give us joy and hope as we long for your second coming when all things will be made new. God help us to control our tongues, may we be a people who do not grumble and complain! May we lift and build one another up through all circumstances. And may we be truth speakers so that we would bring you glory in all that we say and do, In Jesus' name, Amen!

One of the difficulties we moderns have with the spiritual disciplines is our addiction to ease and to "feeling good." But how we "feel" has little, if anything, to do with the spiritual benefit of a situation.