

Patience in the face of Suffering - James 5:7-12

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Any of the talks from any of the speakers, we've had a variety of speakers taking us through James. You can look up the church website and you can follow along from any of the talks.

Sam's passing out notes and pens. If you want one, just put your hand up and one can be brought to you. Thank you, Sam.

So let's read God's Word, James chapter 5, starting at verse 7. Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming.

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near.

Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The judge is standing at the door. Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

[1 : 48] 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.

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. Well, as we look at God's Word together, let's pray and ask for his help.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it speaks truth and grace into our lives.

Amen. We need to hear from you and we need your help in understanding. So please, by your Holy Spirit, be at work and make your word effective in our life, we pray.

[3 : 06] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. You experience opposition because of what you believe.

Do you give up? You receive news that you have an incurable illness. Are you bitter? Your loved one suddenly dies.

[4 : 07] Are you angry? Perhaps in those moments of trial and suffering, you pray more, you believe more, in the hope that God is going to make it all stop and that it's all going to go away.

Well, those that James is writing to are facing all kinds of suffering. Remember how he started the letter.

James chapter 1 verse 2. If you go back to James chapter 1 verse 2. Here's how he started the whole letter. James 1 verse 2.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds. He doesn't say if you face trials, but look carefully whenever you face trials.

We don't go through life suffering free. In fact, James is highlighting at the beginning that we are to expect it.

[5 : 23] We are to prepare for it. And those that he's been writing to have suffered all different kinds of trials. Some of them opposition. Some of them discrimination.

Others, injustice. So have a look at chapter 5 verse 4. You'll remember this from last week.

Chapter 5 verse 4. Look, the wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you.

The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgent. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

So here's the situation that people find themselves in. The rich are getting richer. The poor are getting poorer. The most vulnerable, those who are widows, the orphans, the sick, they're all suffering.

[6 : 28] And instead of equality and fairness, for some, things seem to be getting worse. Injustice is all around them.

So the message is clear throughout James. Suffering is the normal experience of life. And we need to know how we are to respond when we face our particular sufferings.

So how do you respond? How do you respond when trials come? Well, here's the surprise. Rather than pray for our suffering to stop, we are encouraged to be patient.

Rather than pray for it to stop, we are encouraged, first of all, to be patient. Look at verse 7. Chapter 5, verse 7.

Be patient then. In the light of all these trials and all these struggles, as he comes to his conclusion of his letter, be patient then, brothers and sisters.

[7 : 42] Verse 8. You too, be patient and stand firm. Well, it's easy to say, be patient.

But have you any idea what it's like to be constantly accused for something you never did? Do you know what it's like to wait for months, perhaps years, to see a consultant?

Have you experienced what it's like to live with ongoing, unending pain? What planet are you on, James? What do you mean to say, be patient?

I'm suffering here. And I want all these trials to end. Patience. Is that the best that you can offer me? But true faith, genuine faith, is demonstrated in patience.

You see, patience doesn't mean just put up with it and get on with it, grin and bear it. In this context, patience means, and you can read it on the screen, resting in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you, but will ensure that justice is done and all suffering will end.

[9 : 11] that encapsulates the theme of these verses, resting in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you, but will ensure that justice is done and that all suffering will end.

So you see, when you face or receive bad news from your doctor, be patient. If you lose your job and you're struggling financially, be patient.

When you experience an injustice, be patient. When you face opposition because you follow the Lord Jesus, be patient.

And in the face of suffering, James gives us two reasons why we can be patient. Two reasons why we can be patient in the face of suffering.

Number one, the Lord is coming. The Lord is coming. Look at verse 7 again. Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming.

[10 : 35] He tells us the same in verse 8. You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near. The coming of the Lord will ensure that justice will be done and that suffering will end for the believer.

When the Lord Jesus returns again, wrongs will be put to right and our heartaches will be healed. For the Christian, and I want us all to hear this this morning, your struggles and the trials that you may be facing today or that you will face in the future are not forever.

Look closely at verse 7. He says, Be patient until the Lord's coming. Injustice will not last forever. There is a set period of time in which we will go through it, but when the Lord returns, it will end.

Verse 8.

Be patient because the Lord's coming is near. Suffering will soon end because the Lord Jesus is soon to return.

[12 : 02] Because the Lord is coming, because His coming is certain, because His coming is close, I can be patient. He provides us with a helpful little illustration in verse 7.

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

Well, we don't have to wait for rain, do we, in this country? Unfortunately, it rains all the time. But in other countries and in the context that James is writing, well, rains came just twice a year, autumn and spring.

And without the rains falling, there was no fruit, there was no produce. So the farmer does what he can. He plants his seed, he tends to his crop, and then he must patiently wait.

There's nothing he can do to alter or change the seasons or nature. He patiently waits. And although the dry season lasts a long time, months go by, the rains do come.

[13:20] And in the same way, the injustice and the sufferings that we may endure may seem to never end. The season just goes on and on and on.

But the rains will come. The rains will come. The prophets used the rain as a symbol of God's promise coming to restore and renew all things.

If you want, you can have a look. It's on page 914. Keep your finger in James and you can look at Joel chapter 2. Joel chapter 2.

Here's an example of the prophets speaking of the coming rains as a symbol of God's promise coming to restore and renew all things.

Joel chapter 2. It's on page 914. Joel chapter 2.

[14:33] Verse 23. God through the prophets speaking to his people. Verse 23. Be glad, people of Zion.

Rejoice in the Lord your God for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers both autumn and spring rains as before.

The threshing floors will be filled with grain. There's going to be a great harvest. The vats will overflow with new wine and oil. Verse 27.

Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God and that there is no other. Never again will my people be shamed.

As Joel was speaking to the people in the circumstances, he looked forward to the time of the Lord's coming. The rains of renewal and restoration are on the way.

[15:40] So let me encourage you. Rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you, God will not fail you, but will ensure that justice is done and all suffering will end.

And because the Lord is coming, it means then that I can stand firm. Look at verse 8 again of James chapter 5.

Go back to James chapter 5. Verse 8. He says, You too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near.

I don't need to worry when the storms come. When suffering crashes into me like a tsunami, I can stand strong.

The promised coming of the Lord is my anchor. It's my harbor. It's my safety. It's my refuge. God has not abandoned me.

[16:47] He's not going to forget me or fail me. The fact that the Lord is coming and it's absolutely certain and it's getting closer with every day, I can stand firm in my trials and in my difficulties.

The Lord is coming. Stand firm. It also means that I don't have to grumble. Verse 9.

Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The judge is standing at the door. You see, when I experience an injustice, I don't need to seek revenge.

When somebody wrongs me, I don't need to get bitter or angry. When I face discrimination or opposition, I don't need to hold a grudge against that person.

The fact that the judge is coming, the judge who is going to know all things, is going to put every wrong right. So, I don't need to grumble.

[18:01] I don't need to give off. God will not forget you.

God will not fail you. God will ensure that justice is done and suffering will end.

So, reason number one, to be patient. The Lord is coming. Stand firm and don't grumble.

Reason number two, to be patient. The Lord is faithful. The Lord is faithful. Verse 10.

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of our suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

[19:02] So, he's saying, look, stand back from your suffering. Stand back from your trials and let's look at some examples. Look at the prophets. The people in the past who spoke on behalf of God.

Look at their lives. they faced all kinds of suffering. And the fact that they served God and were faithful to God didn't lessen their suffering.

It actually increased because they stood with God. Jeremiah was beaten, imprisoned and faced constant threats to his life.

Ezekiel endured daily opposition and rejection and in the middle of it all, his one companion, his wife, his wife dies.

Daniel, a young man captured and brought to a foreign land, a refugee, ends up in the den of lions. Each of these prophets and all of them besides, they all suffered were but they kept on going.

[20 : 16] They were patient in their trials. Look at verse 11. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. persevered, the word there, it's the same word for patient.

We count as blessed those who have persevered, those who have been patient in their trials. Despite all their struggles, they were patient and they received their reward.

James talked about that, didn't he? Do you remember chapter 1? James chapter 1 verse 12. James chapter 1 verse 12.

Blessed is the one who perseveres, the one who is patient under trial because having stood the test, having gone through all the difficulties and struggles, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you and God will not fail you but will ensure that justice is done and suffering will end.

[21 : 45] The Lord is faithful. Of course, the best example from the prophets is Job, isn't it? Look at the end of verse 11, chapter 5, verse 11.

You have heard of Job's perseverance or Job's patience and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Let's go and have a look at Job. His story is recorded for us in Scripture. We'll come back to James but go to Job.

It's on page 509. Page 509 if you're using the church Bible. Job or sorry, Job.

So James is saying I want us to consider the life of Job. Job, we're told right at the beginning, was a blameless, upright, a man who feared God and shunned evil.

[23 : 10] So if there was anyone who deserved a suffering free life, it was Job. But if you know the story, Job suffered greatly.

He lost his crops and his herds to raiding thieves. All his financial security is gone in a moment. His children all die in a tornado.

Left heartbroken. And then if that isn't bad enough, on top of all of that, we're told that he lost his health to a crippling painful skin disease.

Job was a man who understood and experienced suffering. How did he respond? Well, look at chapter 2 verses 9 and 10.

His wife said to him, are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die. God isn't here to help you, Job.

[24 : 17] God isn't going to do anything for you. Curse God and die. He replied, you are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. As time passed, his suffering increased. Job's so-called comforting friends who come to support him actually actually only added to the pain as they blamed Job for his suffering, saying you must have sinned, you must have done things wrong, God's punishing you, Job.

It was adding insult to injury. How did Job respond to that? We'll have a look at Job chapter 19, verse 25.

Job 19, verse 25. In the midst of his heartache, in the midst of his pain, listen to the words of Job, verse 25.

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth, God will rule.

[25 : 42] And after my skin has been destroyed, after I die, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes, I and not another.

how my heart yearns within me. And when everyone had left Job, and Job was left to himself, and all Job had was the cries of his own pain and heartache, God speaks into Job's life.

Have a look at Job chapter 38, verse 4. Job 38, the last few chapters of Job is a big speech from God speaking to Job.

Job 38, verse 4, God speaks to him and he says, where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know. Who stretched a measuring line across it? Or what were its footing set? Or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

[27 : 06] Job, who created and who sustained the universe? Were you there when I put the universe into existence? Job, who rules and controls the stars and the planets and the tides?

Job, who's over your life? How does Job respond?

Chapter 42, verse 1. Then Job replied to the Lord, I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted. Nothing will ever interfere with the plans and purposes and the promises of God. Job suffered all kinds of injustice but the Lord remained faithful to Job. And at the end of the story of Job, we read these words, chapter 42, verse 10. [28 : 20] After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. Verse 12, the Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part.

Verse 13, and he also had seven sons and three daughters. Verse 16, after this, Job lived 140 years. He saw his children and their children to the fourth generation, and so Job died, an old man and full of years.

Consider and think about the life of Job. Go back to James chapter 5. Job. The point of looking at the life of Job is to see that in the face of suffering, we are to be patient like Job because the Lord is faithful.

Isn't that what it says at the end of verse 11? The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. Because the Lord was faithful to the prophets of the past, because the Lord was faithful to Job, the Lord is going to be faithful to you.

We may not experience healing in this life. Our troubles may last until we die. But the Lord is faithful and he will bring about what he has promised.

[30 : 05] how can I be so sure that God is going to be faithful to me? Well, consider the true and ultimate prophet, the Lord Jesus.

He has secured your future by his death on the cross. He has forgiven all your sin and all your failure and that will never be held against you.

He guarantees your eternal destiny by rising again from the grave. He defeated death. He destroyed it. And through our faith in him, we have the absolute assurance of eternal life.

Consider your true prophet, the Lord Jesus. My brothers and sisters, rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you, God will not fail you.

God will ensure that justice is done and all suffering will end. the message from James is clear.

[31 : 30] In the face of suffering, be patient. Look at verse 12. It's a hard verse. It's hard to work out how it fits in with the rest of what we've just looked at.

But look carefully. He says, verse 12, above all my brothers and sisters, do not swear. Don't make promises. Don't make promises not by heaven or by earth or by anything else.

When we face suffering, we can so easily make rash promises. Lord, if you get me through this difficulty, I promise I will read my Bible more.

Lord, if you just heal me, I promise I'm going to serve more at church. Lord, if you just end this difficulty, I promise I'm going to give you more.

Have you ever made promises like that in your struggles? I have. I've made many promises. Lord, stop the suffering and I promise that I'm going to do better.

[32 : 41] look, the way to deal with suffering is not to try and force God with empty promises. Such promises only have our own interests at heart.

Instead, look at the end of verse 12. All you need to say is a simple yes or no, otherwise you will be condemned. Don't make these promises you can't keep, which are actually self-centered and focused on your own desires about trying to make your life better, which has no interest in God.

Just say yes to God's will. Just say no to your own will.

Lord, I accept what you bring into my life and I will not fight it. I accept what you bring into my life and I will not fight it.

Yes to God's will. No to our own will. Be patient. Be patient because in the face of suffering, remember the Lord is coming.

[34 : 11] The Lord is faithful. Rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you and God will not fail you, but will ensure that justice is done and all suffering will end.

Be patient. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, you know the trials that each one of us walk in and you know the sufferings that we will face in the future.

Not one of us will go through life without heartache or pain. And in the midst of it, Father, we pray that we will keep to our memory that you are coming and that you are faithful and that all who trust

in you, all who look to you have the absolute assurance that you will not fail us.
You will not forget your people but you will ensure that one day justice is done and suffering will end.
give us patience, give us grace until that day. We pray this for your glory and for your honour.
[36 : 15] Amen. We're going to sing together. It's an oldie, old songs. Old songs speak great great