

James Ch5v7-12 - Patience In Suffering

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Date: 05 May 2024

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[0 : 00] Look forward to catching up with you over tea and coffee. Amelia is going to come and read for us from James. So if you want to look up there.

Moving from James 5 verse 7 to 12. 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. 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.

[1 : 21] All you need to say is simple yes or no, otherwise you will be condemned. Thank you very much, Amelia. We're just taking a break this week from our studies in Genesis.

We're going to be looking at James 5, so let's keep our Bibles open there. And we're going to pray and ask for God's help. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you are the God who meets us in our need and holds us by your right hand, your strong, caring and protective hand.

And we ask now that you would speak to us so that you might help us in our lives individually and corporately together as your people.

For we need you. We need your blessing. So help us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So how do you cope with trials and struggles?

[2 : 54] When you face a particular suffering, how do you deal with it? How do you respond to it? If you're treated unjustly and accused falsely, do you seek revenge?

Or if you experience a fallout in a relationship, do you simply just give up? Or you receive news of an unwanted diagnosis, are you bitter?

Or your closest friend suddenly dies, are you angry? Perhaps like me, when things come that we don't want, we just hope and pray that God will make it all stop and all go away.

Well, James is writing to Christians who are facing all kinds of suffering. Just look how he started his letter. Go back to chapter 1 with me for a minute.

Chapter 1, verse 2. This is how he started out.

[4 : 05] Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds. He doesn't say if you face trials, but whenever you face trials.

In other words, we're not going to go through a suffering-free life. In fact, we're to expect it. We're to prepare for it. We will face trials, verse 2, of many kinds.

So I wonder, what is your trial today? Maybe it's physical health concerns. Maybe it's a relational issue.

Could be spiritual. Maybe a combination of all of them. But the message is very clear. Suffering is the normal experience of life.

And we need to know how to respond when we come across it. So how do we respond? Well, let's go back to chapter 5.

[5 : 11] Because surprisingly, we're encouraged to be patient. Look at verse 7. Be patient then, brothers and sisters.

Verse 8. You too be patient. Well, patient in what? Well, look at verse 10. Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering.

Be patient. I mean, have you any idea what it's constantly like to be in trouble? To wait for years for a consultant?

To experience heartache and hardship? What planet are you on, James? What do you mean, be patient? I'm suffering here.

I want it to end and I want it to stop right now. Patience? Is that the best you can offer me? Well, patience doesn't mean just put up and shut up.

[6 : 26] Patience is a demonstration of faith. Patience means resting in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you, but will ensure that all suffering will end.

That's our big theme. Resting in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you, but will ensure that all suffering will end.

So when you receive bad news from your doctor, be patient. When you find the job that you're in a struggle, be patient.

When you experience an injustice, be patient. When we face trials of many kinds, be patient.

patient. In the face of suffering, James gives us two reasons why we can be patient. Here's the first one.

[7 : 35] The Lord is coming. Verse 7. Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. We see the same in verse 8.

You too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord is coming near. When the Lord Jesus returns, all wrongs will be put right, all hurts are going to be healed, and every storm will be stilled.

For the Christian, the message is clear. Your trials are not forever. Did you notice what it said in verse 7? Be patient until the Lord's coming.

So there will come a time when we don't need patience anymore. Verse 8. You too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near.

Suffering will one day end. Because the Lord is coming, because it is certain, I can be patient. He gives us an example of what that patience is in the rest of verse 7.

[8 : 56] Think about the farmers. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

Well, we get rain all the time, don't we? Maybe too much of it and if you're a farmer, you're probably complaining a lot. In other countries, rains come just twice a year, autumn and spring.

And if there's no rain, there's no fruit, there's no produce, there's no crops, the farmer will do what he can, he'll plant his seed and then wait patiently.

And then wait patiently. Although the dry season may last for weeks and months, the rains do come. Well, in the same way, he's telling us that the hardships and the heartaches that we endure, they may seem like they never end.

They just go on and on. But the rains are coming. The end will come. In the Bible, the rains, the rainy season, is symbol of God's promise to renew and to restore all things.

[10 : 16] If you keep your finger in James 5 and go back to Psalm 126, we'll see an example of this. Psalm 126.

So we're thinking of the rainy seasons as a symbol of God's restoration and renewal. And in this psalm, the writer is looking back to better days, to good days.

Verse 2, he tells us, our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. That it was said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them.

Those were good times, the best of times. But now it seems there is a season of suffering. And the cry goes out, verse 4, restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev, waiting for the rains to come.

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. You see, today may be a season of tears, longing, waiting, hoping, but a day is coming when there will be songs of joy.

[11 : 53] Let's go back to James 5. The rains of renewal and restoration are coming. So, rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you, but will ensure that all suffering will end.

Now, because the Lord is coming, it shapes how we live today, right now. Two things here because of the Lord's coming. He tells us to stand firm, verse 8.

You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord is coming. When the storms come upon us, when we're drowning and struggling to breathe, when the waves crash upon us, we can stand firm.

We stand firm on the promises of God that He is coming. That is our anchor. That is our rock and refuge. That is what will give me hope.

This is the confidence and assurance we have. Despite the trials we may go through, God has not abandoned me. He has me in the grip of His right hand, His strong and mighty hand.

[13:17] He will not forget me or fail me. The fact that the Lord is coming means I can stand firm.

But not just stand firm. In our patience and in our waiting, He also says to us, don't grumble. That's a hard one, isn't it?

Verse 9, don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters. You see, when we go through trials, the danger is we can look around us and begin to compare ourselves to others.

Their life is easy. Why don't they ever struggle? If only they knew what it was like. And as we look at the lives of other people and we compare ourselves to them, we can get bitter.

We can become angry. At times we grumble and complain. We can even begin to take our hurts out on others and in our pain we can lash out.

[14:30] Well, He says something to us here. Do you see it at the end of verse 9? Don't grumble or you will be judged. The judge is standing at the door. The judge is coming.

The Lord Jesus is coming. And when He comes He will put everything right. We don't have to do that. He will make it right. So don't grumble.

The Lord is coming. Rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you. But will ensure that all suffering will end.

Oh, you say, Johnny, that's brilliant. The Lord's coming. When's that? That could be another 10 or 20 years. What about now? The heartaches and the struggles are still with me.

I know He's coming. Well, here's the second reason to be patient. The Lord is faithful.

[15:38] Look at verse 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.

Remember the prophets? People like Jeremiah, Isaiah? They were those who spoke God's word on behalf of God. Well, you read their stories and they faced all kinds of suffering.

In fact, it seems to be that those who were prophets and those who served God, it didn't lessen their suffering. It actually increased it. And of course, the best example of one of the prophets who suffered greatly is Job.

That's what we're reminded of if you look at the middle of verse 11. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. He's saying, do you remember the story of Job?

Do you remember? Well, let's go to chapter 38 of Job. Job chapter 38. The beginning of Job, if you don't know it, tells us that Job was a blameless and upright man, one who feared God and shunned evil.

[17:08] He was a good guy. He was a good community person. He loved the Lord. And if anyone deserved a suffering free life, it was Job.

But yet his life was filled with all kinds of suffering. He lost all his crops and all his herds. All his financial security ripped from beneath him.

If that wasn't bad enough, all his children died in a tornado when the house collapsed upon them. And then he lost his health.

to a crippling painful skin disease. And as time passed, the sufferings only seemed to get worse.

His so-called comforting friends, well they began to point the finger and blame him. Well, Job, you know what? If you didn't do this or you didn't do that, then these sufferings wouldn't be happening to you.

[18:12] It was insult to injury. And as the account of Job's life concludes, we find him alone in his pain.

And then God speaks. What would God say? What does he say to us today in our suffering? Well, look at verse 4, Job chapter 38.

With all our questions and wonderings, God asks us questions. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you must know. Who stretched a measuring line across it?

on what were its footings set? Or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Job, were you there at the beginning of time?

[19:23] Who created the universe? Was it you? Who rules and controls all things? Job, who is over your life?

And the questions continue. And then finally Job responds, 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. God's plan, plan, that his people will persevere in the greatest of trials and struggles.

God's plan to make sure his people make it to the end can't be thwarted. It can't be derailed. God is faithful.

Remember what we sang in one of our songs earlier? This is what it's calling for.

[20 : 39] And I will trust the hands that made the starry heavens. And I will trust the wounds of Calvary. And I will trust and I will not be afraid for all his ways are love.

the hands that made the universe, the hands that were crucified for you and for me, the hands that will be upon our life and will make sure that we get to the end will never ever fail us.

God is faithful. Let's go back to James. You see, suffering can knock us and crush us.

We can doubt and we can question. But no suffering, no trial can shake the steadfast faithfulness of God. He created you.

He sustains you. God is fully and faithfully committed to you. His plans to keep you cannot be broken. Look at the end of verse 11.

[22 : 05] He says, you have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. Job's life was restored. He was blessed with a new family and with great wealth.

But here's the point of the text. Do you see it there? The Lord brought it about. The Lord was with Job and assured that he would persevere and not give up and that he would receive.

Now I'm sure that in your suffering sometimes we wonder if I'm ever going to make it. Some days it's like we're on a knife edge and we can take no more.

But the God of Job is our God too. He is faithful and he will bring about what he promised. So rest in the absolute certainty that God will not fail you or forget you but will ensure that all suffering will end. doubt. And if we do doubt and sometimes we do we're given two great assurances of why the Lord is faithful.

[23 : 28] Here's the first one. It comes at the end of verse 11. The Lord is full of compassion. You know when God introduced himself at the beginning of the Bible story he reveals who he is and this is what he says about his name, about his character.

He says the Lord the Lord the compassionate and gracious God. That's how God wants us to know him. He says I am compassion.

You see compassion expresses that deep love and concern he has for his people. It's a gut reaction to our need. God's natural instinct is to enter into our hurts.

He moves towards sufferers not away from them. He embraces the weak. He doesn't shun them. He holds close the broken.

He doesn't rebuke them. a friend of mine was telling me just this week down at the GAA grounds, Wednesday night was a first night for mums to try out GAA.

[24 : 52] And there was about 90 of them there on the pitch. All the children were corralled into an enclosed area nearby. And in the midst of all the noise and all the games and activity there was just a silence.

And then there was a cry went out. Mom! And they said in unison these 90 mums just turned around and just started walking towards where all the kids were corralled.

Compassion. compassion. Moving towards the suffering. God knows your cry before a word is even spoken.

Your suffering matters to God. Compassion is his reaction. But he's not just full of compassion.

He is full of mercy. Full of mercy. God's mercies are seen every day in the air we breathe and the food we eat.

[26 : 07] He doesn't come looking for faults. He doesn't look for a reason to blame. He doesn't come and say come on get on with it try harder.

No he gives to us regardless of what we've done or how we are. One writer puts it like this God never ever stops being God.

He never stops being merciful. Even when the clouds of darkness loom his mercies never cease.

Every day we wake up with a heartache God's mercy meets us. every hardship we encounter God's mercy will be new.

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. And if ever we should doubt it look at the hands of Calvary where Christ entered with compassion into the mess and brokenness of our lives and in his mercy and kindness took our sin upon himself and died for us.

[27 : 22] If God gave us the greatest gift his son how much more will he graciously give to us all that we need.

Compassion and mercy moment by moment day after day year after year. rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you but will ensure that all suffering will end.

So patience the message is clear in the face of our suffering be patient verse 12 above all my brothers and sisters do not swear he's not talking here about bad language but he's saying don't promise don't make promises don't don't make promises by heaven or by earth or anything else. Well what could he mean what's he on about well when we face suffering we can easily make rash promises can't we Lord if you if you just get me through this difficulty I promise I'll read my Bible more.

Lord if you just heal me I'm going to serve more in the church. Lord if you would just end this difficulty I promise I will give more.

[29 : 00] You ever bartered with God like that? I have. Lord if you just stop the suffering I promise I will do better I'll be good.

The way to deal with suffering is not to try and force God with empty promises. We believe his promises. We trust his promises.

Don't make rash promises about ourselves of things we can do which we will never keep. Turn instead to God who is coming.

The God who is faithful. End of verse 12 all you need to say is a simple yes or no otherwise you will be condemned.

Just say yes to God's promise no to the making of our kinds of promises. Lord I trust you.

[30 : 08] I don't understand it all. But you are coming. Suffering will end. And as I wait you are faithful.

You are full of compassion and mercy. So together let us rest in the absolute certainty that God will not forget you or fail you but will ensure that all suffering will end.

Let's pray. Father you know the struggle and the trial that each one here may face.

Father you know the ones that we can share and the inner ones the deep ones that we feel we can't. Thank you that you understand us.

Thank you that you care for us. Thank you that you move towards us and you react with compassion and mercy.

[31 : 34] Thank you father for the great and wonderful promise that you are coming the new heavens and the new creation will one day be ours to enjoy and on that day it'll all be over.

Father please give us strength that we may trust your promise that you will faithfully keep us till that end. We praise you and thank you in Jesus name.

Amen. Well I couldn't find a hymn about patience but I think it does say something about patience and we can sing about the peace that we have from the Lord.

If you're able to stand and sing