

Genuine Faith Perseveres

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[0:00] Amen. Let's pray. Father, we come to you this morning. We praise you. We thank you for all that we have in Christ as we ponder just the reality of what the Almighty can do as we sang about at the beginning.

Lord, we're just reminded that there is nothing that you can't do. Heavens declare the glory of God. God, we are reminded day by day that you are in control of the universe.

You're in control of the nations. You're in control of every heart, God. And as we gather here today, Lord, we're praying that you would just direct us to your hill, that you would help us to reflect your character in our life, and that Christ would be exalted in all things.

So Lord, just bless this time as we continue to worship you together as we move from worshiping in song to worshiping you in the word. And our prayer is that Christ would be exalted in this.

We pray this all in his precious, powerful name. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Do you want to just welcome our newest attendee this morning as we have a Nettles baby with us.

[1:28] We've been praying for this baby. And Eleanor. All right, Eleanor, wave at everybody. She is with us today, but at least Mama can wave at everybody.

We're so grateful for what God has done. He's blessed, provided another child for this family, another arrow for their quiver. And our prayer is that God can continue to pray.

Helping out with mom and kids, and our worship team is doing a great job just carrying that with him, preoccupied with daddy duty.

Interpret that how you will. But so grateful for what God has done. We're so grateful that you're with us.

We've been invited by somebody, and we're just glad you're here with us. Some of our families are out. Some are sick. Some are traveling. My wife is at home and watching online today, not doing well today.

[2:32] And so we're just grateful that you're here with us. As we get to know you, hopefully you've got a little card to fill out. And if you get a chance, just drop in the offering basket back there on the back.

I just want to get to know you as you get to know us. And we want to pray for you and your encouragement along the way.

So this morning, we're going to continue in the epistle of James. And we have had a great study in James. We are coming to the conclusion of this.

I don't know how long it'll take for us to get to the very end of it. Maybe another year. I don't know.

But there's only a few verses to deal with. So maybe there's hope. There's light at the end of the tunnel. As we walk through this epistle, we've gone pretty much word by word, line by line, as we've gone through up to chapter five.

Today, we are in verse seven. And so you can turn to James chapter five, verse seven. And today we'll be talking just about this issue of enduring hardship.

[3:42] And how do we do that to the glory of God? The reality is we've got some great encouragement in this text. And I think, I think in the end, it gives us some handles to hold on to when you don't feel like you can hold on.

And so it's, it's, it's going to be good. If you haven't found your place there, go ahead and turn there and we'll read that in just a second. But I was thinking this week, especially this Wednesday, I was reminded of this as somebody made a post because in Oxford, England, in the middle of Broad Street, there is just embedded in the black top road there in the middle of the intersection.

There, there are stones that are, that are embedded in some mortar. that make the shape of a cross in the middle of the street. And this is actually the spot where Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were martyred on the 16th of October, the year 1555.

And, and so that's 469 years ago. this past Wednesday, this past Wednesday, these men were considered some of the English reformers and they were martyred because of their insistence on sola scriptura, that the scripture alone is the authority.

Uh, this came into play because, uh, just, this was right around the time Henry the eighth died. well, it was after that because Henry the eighth died.

[5:22] Uh, Henry the eighth, uh, uh, had a son by the name of Edward and Edward was Protestant. And during Edward's rule, their products, Protestants were on the rise.

So, uh, they were in, in, uh, popular positions at this point, because of course the King is a Protestant, but then Edward died. And when Edward died, his sister takes the throne.

Her name is Mary, better known as bloody Mary. And, uh, she was not a Protestant. She was a Catholic, Roman Catholic. Her mother was Spanish.

And, uh, so when she took the throne, she wanted to reunite England with the Roman Catholic church. And the way to do that was to silence all of the heretics.

And so 300 Protestant pastors during this period were martyred, put to death. And so this particular spot, in England, still, if you go down the road in Oxford, there is this tiled section of street where this cross is made, because that was the spot where Latimer and Ridley were martyred.

[6:35] And, and they were some of the more famous ones of this period that were martyred. Uh, at that time, uh, Latimer was in his seventies and Ridley was in his fifties.

They were both pastors. Uh, it was a risky business being a pastor in that period. Uh, and, and so both of these guys were imprisoned.

They were, uh, put on trial and they were convicted of being heretics. And therefore they were going to be put to death. They were chained together in this spot.

As, uh, Ridley, I believe it was Ridley that went up. He kissed the stake and they were chained together. And, and, and as the fires were being lit for them to be burned at the stake.

And you can just realize this was an intense time to be a Christian. Uh, as the, the, the fires were being lit. Uh, it was, I think it was, uh, Mortimer or Ridley that was, uh, losing heart at that moment.

[7:41] You can only imagine as the fires were being lit. And Latimer leans over to him and says, uh, in the quote, be of good comfort, master Ridley and play the man.

We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out. And you just think, wow, what kind of faith?

Uh, they were publicly burned at the stake. And I was reading through this week, just the details of it. I won't share, you know, all of that, uh, this morning, but just, uh, just horrendous.

Be of good comfort, master Ridley, play the man, stand up to this moment. If Christ is for us, who could be against us? And, and this really is significant.

I think, especially for us in a day where we don't face that kind of persecution, at least in America, at least right now, uh, we have to recognize that around the world, there are believers right now, this very day that are suffering that kind of intense persecution, just because they have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[9:03] It's the reality. And, and we come to our passage this morning, and James is writing to believers who are enduring all kinds of persecution.

And he reminded them of that, as you recall, in the very first words of the letter, when he said, count it all joy when you fall into trials of various kinds, to all kinds of degrees.

Some very severe, some not so severe. James himself is going to be persecuted after, sometime after the writing of this letter, he's going to be thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem.

He's going to be stoned and beaten with a fuller's club until he dies. Uh, this is a significant passage, really, when you think about somebody who understood the weight of what it meant to follow Christ, and would have to play the man himself.

You look at examples like that, like James, like martyrs who have gone before us, and you have to wonder, would I be so determined if it came to that point that I would stand and play the man, play the woman, stand with integrity, in the face of whatever hardship comes.

[10:23] And you read through this passage, and you realize, and you maybe sometimes wonder if it's easier for somebody to die for the faith, or if it's easier to live for the faith.

If it's harder to die for the faith, or if it's harder to live for the faith. Because I think in these times when things are not so bad, you really get a taste and a test of how you're going to do when intensity comes in its harder forms.

How do I endure hardship? Bring it home. How do I endure a bad marriage? How do I endure singleness?

Do I grumble and do I complain? Do I take matters into my own hands? Do I get bitter? Do I become angry? Do I work really hard to vindicate myself? When I'm afraid I'm going to miss out on something because I'm being done wrong?

Do I take matters into my own hands? Do I stop consulting God? Do I start doing things my own way? As we saw last week, if I start to make plans, really the reality is, he's reminding us, living faith lives out the faith.

[11:48] Living faith is really what's in question. Has my faith in Christ actually changed me and affected me to the point that it affects how I respond to hardship?

And this is a sign in some ways of maturity in Christ, but the reality here he's getting at is, this is what living faith looks like.

You want to know if you have living faith? You want to know if your faith is active and growing? Here's what it looks like. The idea of the text is that I shouldn't give up when I feel like I've been done wrong or when I'm faced with temptation because somebody's done me wrong.

Living faith actually lives out the faith. Let's go ahead and stand. We're going to read this together.

Chapter 5, beginning in verse 7. James is encouraging us to live out our faith with endurance.

Not when it's easy. That's not endurance. But in the face of injustice, in the face of suffering, hardship, as we're going to see, like a farmer, like the prophets, like Job, he's going to encourage us to endure while we wait for the coming of the Lord.

[13:12] Beginning in verse 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.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brother, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job. You have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

But above all, my brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth, by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

[14:29] Father, may you bless the reading of your word today and you encourage us to endure hardship to the glory of God. We pray this in Jesus' precious, powerful name.

Amen. You may be seated. Living faith has to live out the faith. And the picture here that James is giving is that it's going to be seen in patience and in endurance when we face our hardships.

I really think the issue is too often we are tempted to give up way too soon. That's why I love reading about Navy SEALs and watching those documentaries on Navy SEALs and how tough these guys are.

I think of myself as being kind of that tough. Okay, maybe not. But I'd like to think that, right? And so I remember my dad nicknamed me his little frog when I was just a little kid.

The little frog. And so the reason he said that is because when we would go out to the pool, everybody would jump in the pool except me. I'd sit on the side.

[15:46] And the reason I'd sit on the side is because the water's cold and I'm not getting in. I am not getting in. It's cold. I'd put my toe in and I would sit on the side for the longest time. And just even as an adult, I still have this thing about getting in cold water.

I'm just not going to do it. Okay? And so I've watched these Navy SEAL documentaries and I've read the books and it shows these guys and they're out in the frigid waters, you know, laying on the shore and they're conditioning themselves.

And so I think of that every time I go to the pool and I think, I can actually do. I can do more than I set my mind to do, you know? And I jump in the water and go, why did I do that?

It's cold. And I get out and I don't want to do it again. But I think reality is, we give up way too soon and we don't realize that we can do way more than we think we can do.

And this is true in the Lord. In Christ, I can do way more than I think I can do. My abilities are not limited to who I think I am.

[16:58] My abilities are expanded to who Christ says I am. I'm not limited to my sinful predispositions. I'm not limited to my bad habits.

My abilities are actually expanded to who Christ says I am. When Christ says I am something, that means something. The big question for us is, then why should I wait?

Why should I do what's right? Why should I hold out? Why should I exercise patience and endurance when things sometimes seem so hard? In fact, I think the real question as I look at this passage is, how do I do it?

Because I don't want to do it. I need to know how. I want to see what it looks like. And as I come to this passage, James is really just emboldening us, I think, with some compelling ways that you actually live out faith in patience, no matter what the hardship is.

And these become handles for us. I think there's three handles that you can hold on to when things are difficult, when you're having to hold on and you're tempted to give up and you're needing to endure.

[18:11] And this is the picture that's being given here. Three ways that I see here. Number one, it begins in verse 7. The first way that I see in the text is just we are compelled to live with constant expectation until the Lord comes.

This is a way that we live out the faith with endurance. I live with a sense of expectation, constant expectation about the Lord's coming.

So listen to the way he says this in verse 7. Be patient, therefore, brothers, until when? Until the coming of the Lord.

Be patient. Remember the context. In the context that we talked about last week, they're rich and poor. There's this disparity between the two. Rich are taking advantage of the poor.

In the last section, it was really heavy-handed against the rich and how they were treating the poor, how they're defrauding the poor, and how judgment is coming. They need to expect the judgment that's coming.

[19:25] But now the tables are turning a little bit, and now it's a little more heavy-handed to the poor. And saying, okay, yes, there is rebuke for the rich, but there is encouragement for you that are being done wrong.

You that are being done wrong, you are to be patient. Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth, being patient about it? And this word that he uses here is really interesting. The word patient there, it's not merely waiting, but this is waiting in spite of something that provokes.

So you're waiting in spite of something. So it's being translated as being patient, at which we understand that idea. There's something provoking, there's something against me, and I'm waiting in spite of that thing.

It's not just empty waiting. So the context here is kind of pointing back to the fact that some of these people have actually been done wrong. They were cheated out of their wages.

[20:36] They were cheated out of what was owed them. Otherwise, he would have just said, well, just wait. And he didn't say just wait. He said, be

patient. You are enduring up against something.

This is how you demonstrate living faith. This is what living out the faith looks like. You want to see genuine faith? Genuine faith has been done wrong, and it actually waits in spite of it.

It stands up in spite of being done wrong. What are you going to hold on to when things are bad and when you're done wrong? And Jesus uses the example here of the farmer.

So then he says in verse 7, Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits.

See how he stands up against the elements. See how he stands up against time. See how he stands up against circumstances. He's using the example of a farmer that's waiting for the precious fruit, as he said, the precious fruit of the earth, and he's waiting for the latter rains to come.

[21:49] Just the early rains and the latter rains. The seasons are coming, and before the harvest comes, he needs that rain, and he has no control over it. He's to endure, and he's to wait in spite of that.

He's to work. He's not to give up. And then when he uses this word, it's kind of a shift in word meaning here, using a slightly different word, meaning to stay in place and to await the arrival of something or someone.

So now it's he's waiting for the fruit to come, and there's an anticipation of the coming of that fruit, and his mind is set on this.

So how is he going to hold on while he works, when he gets tired, when he gets worn out, when it seems like nothing's happening? He is to keep his mind set on what is coming, the expectation or the advent of the coming of that fruit.

And that's the word that he uses here, and it's kind of an allusion to the coming of Christ, that waiting, that anticipation. When we celebrate Christmastime, that's why we refer to it as the advent of Christ, that we celebrate the fact that Christ came in the past, and it's pointing to the fact that Christ one day is going to come.

[23:15] And this reality is something that we're setting our minds on. Because if you set your mind on that, you can hold on during any kind of storm, any kind of drought.

You can make it through because you're anticipating that coming moment. And I love just this reference to the farmer here, because in the original language, the word farmer is Georgos. It's where we get our name in English, George. It literally means a man who works the earth. Be like George.

I mean, that's not what he's saying. That's just me. Be like George. Be like the farmer. Be like the guy who's waiting. And what does he say you're to do as you wait like this farmer?

He says, establish your hearts in this. Establish your hearts. Look at how he worded it as he moves through verse 7. He's waiting for verse 7.

[24:19] He, see how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it until he receives. He's anticipating this. He's waiting until he receives the rains.

You also be patient, establishing your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. So notice how James is describing the coming of the Lord to the hearers in the first century.

So what he's saying is, like the farmer who's looking forward to the harvest of the early and the latter rains, all along the way he's having to endure.

He's having to continue to work. He's having to continue to move in spite of being tired, against the elements, all of that, because he's got his mind set on the harvest. And he's going to keep his mind set on that.

But what James said is the harvest is right now. You're to have your mind set as if you're working, working, working, like the harvest is coming, but you're to have your mind fixed on this, your heart strengthened within, as if Christ is coming now.

[25:31] The harvest is upon you. Now imagine the distinction that he's making about holding on at the beginning of the work of the harvest versus the end of the harvest when you see the fruit coming up.

Now what he's saying is, your mind set, in order for you to be able to hold on and endure during persecution or hardship or difficulty or your bad marriage or your drought time of your life or whatever it is that's going on that's burdening you right now, the ability for you to hold on during that

is for you to fix your mind, strengthen your heart in this, that Christ is coming.

And fixing your mind on that and reminding yourself of that during these times is what is going to enable you to hold on. Isn't that beautiful?

I mean, look at the duration. Until when? Until it gets hard? No. Notice the wording. Be patient. Until the coming of the Lord.

The farmer waits for the precious fruit until it comes. Be patient, therefore. You, be patient. Until he comes. And it's at hand.

[26:47] So notice the time markers. It's coming, it's coming. And yet it's at hand. It's the idea of imminence. A sense of imminence of the Lord's return.

That's what believers have held on to. Spurgeon said, A man to whom it is given to wait for a reward keeps up his courage. And when he has to wait, he says, It is no more than I expected. I never reckoned that I was to slay my enemy at the first blow. I never imagined that I was to capture the city as soon as I had digged the first trench.

I reckoned upon waiting. And now that it has come, I find that God gives me the grace to fight and to wrestle on until the victory shall come.

And it is patience that saves a man for that great day. Until the coming of the Lord. The parousia is what we refer to this as.

[27:48] That coming of Christ. We're looking to the coming of Christ. That's a mark of who believers are. We anticipate his coming. The coming of the Lord is our hope.

And as hope, sure. Think of how Peter encouraged believers with this in 1 Peter 1.

He said in 1 Peter 1.13, Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit and fix your hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to you as a context of intense persecution.

How are you going to hold on in the prison cell? And he's saying, You're going to hold on by fixing your mind on the coming of Christ.

He's coming. So hold on. And Paul said the same thing to the church at Colossae. He said, Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

[29:05] Set your mind on these things above and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Keep your mind fixed on this.

Like it's coming right now. Like we're not going to make it through this day. Will that affect the way we think? How we hold on?

That's the handle. Coming of the Lord is at hand. A.W. Pink said, He said, When we say the Redeemer's return is an imminent event, we do not mean it will occur immediately, but that He may come back in our lifetime.

He may come back this year. He may come back today. We cannot say when, but we live with an imminence in our mind that it could happen immediately.

[30:07] Everything could unfold in a flash. It means it's impossible to know when, so the believer remains constantly on the lookout so that we're not unprepared.

That's a different way to live. That's why we hold on when health goes bad, when struggling comes. I'm not just living like the harvest will come at any time.

I'm living like it's coming at hand. Farming is hard work. Anybody ever done farming work? You know? I mean, I grew up kind of a city boy, but my stepdad at one time had a little farm, and we had to go work it.

And I didn't really understand what that meant. I thought me and my brothers were going to shoot BB guns and have fun, whatever. And there were rows of corn and rows of potatoes and beans and all kinds of stuff, and we worked all day.

Like, all day. I mean, you talk about slave labor. We were digging potatoes out of the dirt.

[31:24] I mean, the tractor goes through, it knocks it all over, and then we're getting them all out, putting them in buckets, and we were working.

I think every kid ought to have to work a farm.

Every kid ought to have to work a farm at some point. I think I was talking to Jed, our drummer, Jed Adaya back there. His family has a farm.

And just talking about that, they grow wheat and some other things. But his dad learned how to work the soil. And his dad understood the science of the soil.

And so he had a schedule that he worked to make sure that the soil was rich and that everything was right. Because if the soil's right, guess what?

Things actually grow. You can count on it. Like, it's going to grow. You can't control the weather, you can't control drought, things like that, but you do control the soil and getting all the nutrients in the soil and getting it to the right conditions.

[32:28] And if their conditions are wrong, and if they don't do, and don't stick to that schedule, then what happens? All these weeds grow up, sagebrush, and all this other kind of stuff that they don't want. And it ruins the crop.

And they can't do that. So they've got to stay on top of the soil because things are going to grow. And as we were talking about it, he was just describing some of this. And I'm thinking about the sermon.

And I'm thinking about this passage. Because he's talking about, yeah, we've got to rent equipment because we've got to have machinery that works those fields. And we've got to hire people to help with these things.

And we've got to rent trucks. And we've got to do this. And they're scheduling out way ahead of time. Why? Because they know what's coming. And they're working like they know that it's coming. And they're anticipating that it's coming. And if I say, Jed, hey, can you come? Hey, let's get together. Let's do a Bible study together. And he's like, man, I've got to think about my schedule right now.

[33:26] I've got school right now. But I've got to make sure that the farm is running. And I've got to be out there because there's people counting on me. And I've got to do this stuff. And I'm just thinking, man, this is the picture of working with the harvest in mind.

It's like he's anticipating it coming. And it's almost like it's already here. He's concerned about this and that and all the details of working that farm. Kind of like a believer is supposed to be living. That we're living as if the harvest is coming. We're in constant expectation as if it's already here. All through the New Testament, we see this.

1 Thessalonians 4. Paul said, For this we declare to you by the word from the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

[34:30] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

Hold on with these words. As things are tough, as things are difficult, as persecution comes, you need to be thinking with this mindset. When the difficulties of life come, whatever it is, Jesus said in Revelation 22, verse 12, Behold, I am coming soon.

I'm bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done. He who testifies of these things says, Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Amen. Oh, come Lord Jesus.

He's coming. The great Bible teachers have reminded us this generation after generation. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, The great doctrine of the second advent has, in a sense, fallen into disrepute because of this tendency on the part of some to be more interested in the how and of the when of the second coming rather than in the fact of the second coming.

The surety, the certainty of the second coming is what I'm setting my mind on. As John MacArthur said so clearly, he said the second coming of Jesus Christ is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith.

[35:59] It is not minor. It is not unimportant. It is not secondary or tertiary. It is critical. It is the substantial reality of our faith. In fact, in some ways, the second coming of Christ is the most important of

events because it's the end of the immediate story.

Because the second coming consummates everything. To minimize the second coming is to minimize everything else because this is the finale.

It's the culmination. His return consummates the history of the world and the history of redemption and the fulfillment of all God's pledges and promises and covenants and the threats and the warnings.

All blessings and all judgments in its final disposition is connected with the coming of Jesus Christ. World history seems sometimes to be careening sort of helter-skelter, pell-mell into blackness, sort of uncontrolled.

But this is not the case. While men's behavior becomes less and less controlled, the very moment of history is under the sovereign control of God who is moving it inexorably exactly to the point which he has predetermined and that point is the return of Christ Jesus the Lord.

[37:20] Aren't you glad? It's what we count on and it's what we hold on to until Alexander McLaren was the Scottish Baptist pastor in the 1800s.

He said, the primitive church thought more about the second coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. The early Christians were looking not for a cleft in the ground called a grave, but for a cleave or a cutting open of the sky.

They were watching not for the undertaker, but for the upper taker. Oh man, that is. That is the perspective. That is the perspective that you can hold on to when things are hard, when you've been done wrong, or when things in your life are getting difficult.

We give up too easy. Believers are called to strengthen their hearts with this. The coming of the Lord is at hand. Don't you give up.

When you're tempted to give up, you remind yourself of this. Yes, things are hard. Yes, things are difficult. But he's coming. So hold on. Yes, things are painful.

[38:38] Yes, there are wounds that you can barely bear. Speak words to your soul today. He's coming. He's coming for you. Living faith lives out the faith with constant expectation.

Number two. Second handle here. How do we live out the faith? By living in the clarity of biblical examples.

Clarity of biblical examples. See how he said in verse 10? As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. Those prophets who remained steadfast. They spoke in the name of the Lord. Man, they were identified by their ministry to the Lord.

And they had to endure a lot of things, didn't they? Take them as an example of suffering and patience. They suffered. You've heard the steadfastness of Job.

[39:49] Did Job suffer? It's funny when you talk about Job as an example, a specific example of all the prophets as he's bringing him up here. It seems like a lot of lost people know about Job.

Isn't that funny? And I talked to a guy who's a hardcore atheist, no church background, and I started talking about some circumstances in my life, and he said, man, that sounds a lot like Job.

And I said, wow, it's funny you would mention Job. He's an example of steadfastness. He's known for his suffering.

Even lost people know that he went through a lot. He lost a lot. He just went through hard stuff. That's basically the gist. You've heard of the steadfastness of Job. And in this, what did you see? You've seen the purpose of the Lord. How the Lord is compassionate and merciful, even in our suffering. James reminding believers of prophets who have endured a lot, and Job specifically, whose perseverance is exemplary for us.

[41:04] And he uses the word, and I thought, as I saw this, I was looking up, you know, the key words here. I was assuming that this was going to be the word *martyreo*, or where we get our English word *martyr*, but it wasn't.

He didn't use that here. And I thought, oh, that's interesting. Usually he would use the word *martyr* as living example. We've had it become to mean those who die for the faith, and we call them *martyrs* based on that Greek word.

Well, they were examples of the faith. They died for it. We now assume that it's all about death, but it's really the example. They were examples. And here he uses a completely different word to say, these prophets were examples for you.

And what this means is they are an example of behavior for the purpose of moral instruction. They are an example or a model or a pattern for you to follow.

Literally. You can look at the way they suffered and the way they endured so that no matter your enduring situation, you can apply the truth of these men to you if you follow Christ.

[42:15] And so this is where I differ from some of the critics that would say every time, you know, you make application in Old Testament passages like David, he's lying, he killed the giants, and there's a lot of there's sometimes an over-criticism to say, well, that's not talking about you, that's talking about Christ.

Well, actually it's both. Actually, the passage is referring to Christ and how he's going to defeat all of the enemies and how he's going to overcome and how he's going to be a mighty king. and David is the perfect example of that. But what we also learn is that these men were also an example for you to follow. Meaning that the kind of faith that he had is the kind of faith that I should have.

So the primary message is yes, that it's about Christ coming, but it's also about you looking at his example and saying, I need to be like George, I need to be like David, I need to be like Samuel, I need to be like the prophets, I need to be like Abraham, I need to be like Moses, I need to follow the example of the prophets.

Jesus said in Matthew 23, 31 to the Pharisees, you're witnessing against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Prophets suffer.

[43:43] They go through hard stuff. Jesus even acknowledged this. Fill up then the measure of your fathers, you serpents, you brood of vipers. How are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

Therefore I send you the prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of you will kill and crucify. Some of you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town.

From the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar, truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often I would have gathered you like children, like a hen, her brood under her wings.

And yet you were not willing. Prophets. prophets were faithful in spite of death. And they were patient.

[44:45] They were long-suffering and you are to be patient and you are to be long-suffering. To be long-suffering means to be strong and decisive. You're to stand firmly.

To be patient is speaking of temper and passion and emotion. To burn with intense anger can be a form of this.

To be intense. But in this form, it means not to give in to temptation, not to give in to that intensity. I am being intense about not being intense. Be intense about not being angry. Be intense about not responding wrongly.

This is how God's character is seen in the Old Testament. Exodus 34. The Lord passed by in front of them and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger.

[45:51] Uses the same word in loving kindness and truth. He is slow to anger. You be slow to anger. You be slow to pay back.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, Psalm 103, slow to anger. The Septuagint uses the same Greek word there. Slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness.

In Psalm 145, the Lord is gracious and merciful. He is slow to anger and great in loving kindness. It was Job who said in Job 42.2, after all the suffering and after God just revealed all the truth to him that he was still in control in spite of everything.

At the end, what did Job say? He said, Job 42.2, And Lord, I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Be like Job. That's what, that's what he's saying here. It's like he's, he's reading through the book of Job and just being reminded of what endurance looks like.

[46:55] Be like the prophets. Be like Job. James started this by saying that very thing in chapter one, verse two, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

Same word. Be steadfast. Endure hardship. Stand strong. James 1.12, 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 made.

Examples of the prophets and those that have gone before, take those examples, those clear examples and hold on to those. Mimic those. Follow those examples.

Been through hardship? Been through difficulty? Had a rough day? Rough week?

A rough month? Or a rough year? You know, ministry can sometimes be hard. And I think of the prophets and as I'm thinking through that, I'm like, ooh, brother, I can feel their pain.

[48:22] That's not a woe, it's me. I knew what I was getting into, getting into ministry. Sometimes your life is spent on people and they don't give a rip. They really don't.

They don't care. And today, you have to kind of harden your, you know, stiffen your back a little bit to ministry because today, people will be my best friend and tomorrow, they will cry, crucify, crucify. It's just the way it is, you know. It's human nature. It's not a particular church. It's not just a particular person that somebody comes to your mind, you know. That's just people.

Life is actually hard. It's difficult. My family goes through stuff. We all go through stuff.

But every time I come back to those examples and I go, but I haven't suffered like that. And then I look to Jesus. I have to say, I haven't suffered like that.

[49:32] God's given us examples to follow. I like how Corrie Ten Boom said it. Corrie Ten Boom during World War II was the one lady that hid a lot of Jews.

She went around speaking for years after that. It was 1974 she wrote this. She said, the world is deathly ill. It's dying. The great physician has already signed the death certificate.

Yet there is still a great work for Christians to do. They are to be streams of living water, channels of mercy to those who are still in the world. It is possible for them to do this because they are overcomers.

Christians are ambassadors for Christ. They are representatives from heaven to this dying world. And because of our presence here, things will change. My sister Betsy, she said, my sister Betsy and I were in the Nazi concentration camps at Ravensbrook because we were committed to the crime of loving Jews.

700 of us from Holland, France, Russia, Poland, and Belgium were herded into a room built for 200. As far as I knew, Betsy and I were the only two representatives of heaven in that room.

[50:49] We may have been the Lord's only representatives in that place of hatred, yet because of our presence there, things changed. Jesus said, in this world we will have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. And we too are to be overcomers, bringing the light of Jesus into a world filled with darkness and hate. Sometimes I get frightened as I read the Bible and as I look in this world and see all the tribulation and persecution promised by the Bible coming true today.

Now I can tell you, though, if you too are afraid, that I have just read the last pages and I come to the shouting of hallelujah, hallelujah. For I have found where it is written that Jesus said, he that overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.

This is the future and the hope of this world, not that the world will survive, but that we shall overcome and be overcoming in the midst of this dying world.

Yeah. Yeah. Ooh. Examples. The biblical witness of the prophets remind us that God always has a purpose.

[52:05] That's what you saw in Job. That God always has a duration for our suffering. That's what you saw in Job. And that God proves in the end that he always restores better than anything that was ever taken from us.

That's what we see in Job. Amen. Hebrews reminds us without faith it's impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

By faith, Noah. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Isaac and Jacob. By faith, Sarah. Faith, faith, faith. Examples for us to follow.

Romans 15, 4 said, For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

See it? It's the handle for us to hold on to. Not only do I have an expectation of his coming but I have clear examples that I hold on to to say if they made it through, I can make it through.

[53:09] If Job made it through, I haven't suffered that much. I can make it through. If Jesus did what he did for me, then brother, I can stand through the difficulty at the workplace and suffer not getting a promotion and it's okay because one day Jesus is coming and I've got examples that I can follow that stand out with great clarity.

1 Corinthians chapter 10, these things happened to them as an example but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the age has come.

In other words, until he comes, hold on to these examples. That's why we study the scripture. That's why we look at the biblical characters and study their lives and look and see what they believed and what they did.

I want to be like George. It's not the illogical I know. I want to be like Job. Peter reminded us, 1 Peter 2, 21, for to this you have been called.

Because Christ Jesus also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

[54:28] Hold on to these examples. Therefore, your hope, therefore, your encouragement, strengthen your inner man with these things.

though I sometimes question God's hand, the old saying goes, never question God's heart. I know he's got a plan.

This is my handle when hardship comes, when I face trials, when I draw strength from the examples that he's given me in the scriptures. You're single, you feel like you're being cheated. Hold on. Be single for the glory of God, the reward is always greater than the suffering. When you're being overlooked at work, you're not being promoted because you're a Christian, because you got morals and scruples and you don't do the dirty jokes with other people.

Don't come to the place where you just say, I'm just going to do like they do and I'm just going to manipulate the situation and be like everybody else. No. Hold on. When you feel like you have to take shortcuts instead of doing the right thing, no, hold on.

[55:39] When you're tired of taking your responsibility as a husband and you're worn out and you think, I can't do this anymore, no, hold on. When you think you can't work on your marriage, no, you keep holding on.

People have been through way worse and they've done the right thing. They followed Christ to the death. Can you not hold on? you have examples to hold on to.

You don't have to YouTube it. Just open your Bible. Living faith lives out the faith by following the clear examples until the coming of Christ.

And then finally, I'll end with this. third handle. We live with a sense of certain accountability.

Certain accountability. And he gives the specifics in verse nine, especially about those poor. Do not grumble against one another.

[56:48] Brothers, so that you may not be judged. Yes, your grumbling will be judged. And behold, he says, verse nine, the judge is actually standing at the door, just like the harvest.

It's way out there, right? It's way out there in the future, and I want to keep my mind on it, so I need to have a mindset that it's imminent, that it's coming right now. And in the same way, he's saying, your mind needs to be set like that on judgment, because that's just as close as well.

He's standing at the door. And what a picture that is for every child, right? Parents standing at the door. I couldn't help but think of the video on one of the kids' computers.

They had a computer and it had a camera on it. When they were little, it was just kind of a junk computer, but the camera worked and it recorded videos, so they would always get on there and

they would record all these things, so they'd be goofing off, and we'd just laugh hysterically as we watched them talking to the camera and pretending like they're doing whatever. And there'd be times when they were fighting and the camera would still be on. You idiot dum-dum! You know, whatever they would say. And we'd just crack up, so we'd still call each other idiot dum-dum.

[58:12] But it's funny, because in one of those particular videos, they are going on and going on and going on, and if you remember, mom comes around the corner, and Brandy is just standing there at the door, and she's just letting them go.

She's just watching them, and all of a sudden, it all breaks loose. Everybody's getting a whooping, you know. It's just one of those moments where I think, where he says, the judge is standing at the door.

You don't realize he's been listening the whole time. He's been watching the whole time. He gives that grumble in the sense of an imperative.

Stop doing this. You cannot be a negative person and be in the will of God. When you're a grumbler about every time something goes wrong in every circumstances of your life, what you're saying is, I don't believe God.

Right? I don't believe he's going to be just in my circumstances. I don't believe he's going to take care of me. I don't believe he's going to meet my needs. I don't believe he's going to vindicate me.

[59:32] I don't believe him. Therefore, I'm going to take things into my own hands. I'm going to do things my own way. You see the progression. The judge is at the door.

Or like the movie we saw the other day where this guy goes to his bank, he's struggling with money, he goes to the ATM and all of a sudden there's like \$700,000 in his account. He's hitting it, he's stuffing all this money into his backpack and it's falling all over the ground and he doesn't even care and he's running off with it.

And as I watch it, I'm thinking, you're not going to get away with that. There's a camera right there. They know your account, they're going to come.

The judge is standing at the door. It just stems from my pride. It's all the way back to the roots of all of my sin issues.

You follow Jesus' teaching all the way through the New Testament, every parable, and watch him speak about expectation of judgment that's coming. like we think that's like the minor theme.

[60:40] It's actually the major theme. You walk through the parables, the parable of the watchful servants. What are they watching for? Well, their master's coming back to judge what they've done.

Luke chapter 12. Matthew 24, parable of the thief in the night. Well, that one's kind of self explanatory. Jesus is coming back like a thief in the night. He's going to come in an hour when we don't expect to judge the parable of the faithful and wise servant.

The manager of the household is managing things in the absence of the master. The master's coming back. The parable of the rich fool in Luke chapter 12.

He hoards all of his wealth. And what's going to become of your wealth when you're gone? There's judgment coming. It's anticipation of it. Parable of the ten virgins.

The bridesmaids are awaiting the bridegroom and some of them are not prepared. The whole theme is judgment is coming. There's accountability for what you do. Are you going to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ and be saved?

[61:52] And are you going to walk with Christ and obey the things that he's commanded? Parable of the wedding feast. The guests are invited. Some aren't ready.

Are you going to be clothed in the right garments at the wedding feast of the land? Are you going to put on Christ? The judge is Christ.

Ecclesiastes 12 says, For God will bring every deed into judgment, every secret thing, whether good or evil. Isaiah said, This is coming. For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

And the earth will disclose the bloodshed on it. And no one, and no more cover its slain. Paul said it in Romans 14, For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow and every tongue confess to God. So then, he said, let each one of us give an account of himself to God.

[62:57] Why? Accountability is certain. Certain. That's what I'm holding on to. I realize that there is an accountability for the things that I do.

And one day, that's coming. So the coming of the Lord is one part, that's one handle, I'm holding on to that. When things get tough, I'm reminding myself, I can make it through anything, Christ is coming.

And when things get tough, I can look to the clear examples and say, there are examples of people who have done this before, I can stand on this truth because he's coming and there are clear examples.

And then I need to remind myself that there is also certain accountability. It is coming. I'm going to give an account for the things done in the body. One day, I'm going to stand before the Lord. Am I grumbling?

Am I complaining? Is my yes, yes, and my no, no, do I mean what I say? Am I going to hold on? Martin Luther said, I preach as though Christ died yesterday, arose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow.

[64:07] That's how I preach. So hold on. I'll close with this, I promise. Okay, this is it. This was good.

Because I was reading that, there was an article about Corrie ten Boom, and as I read through that, she ended up talking about the end times and just how the encouragement of the end times is so important for enduring hardship.

And she said, she said, Betsy and I, in the concentration camp, prayed that God would heal Betsy, who was so weak and so sick.

Yes, the Lord will heal me, Betsy said, with confidence. And she died the next day. I could not understand it. They laid her thin body on the concrete floor along with all the other corpses of the women who died that day.

It was hard for me to understand, to believe that God had a purpose for all of that. Yet, because of Betsy's death today, I am traveling all over the world telling people about Jesus.

[65:15] There are some among us, she said, teaching that there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be escaping all of this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days.

Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution right now.

In China, the Christians were told, don't worry, before the tribulation comes, you'll be translated, you'll be raptured. Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later, I heard a church leader from China say, sadly, we have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them that Jesus would come first.

We're not saying we're wrong in our theology, just wrong in our emphasis. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution. how to stand when tribulation comes.

[66:21] How to stand and not faint. She went on and said, I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are in training for tribulation, but more than 60% of the body of Christ across the world has already entered into tribulation. There is no way to escape it.

We are next. since I have already gone through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met that church leader in China, now every time I read a good Bible text, I think, how will I use that in my next time of tribulation?

church leader how are you going to hold on? You've got some handles, some examples, some things to hold on to, and it's just the reminder that in the end you need Christ.

You need his presence, you need his strength, and without him you can't do it. You can't hold on to the simplest things. That's just a test. This was just crumbling over being done wrong.

[67:36] That's just the test. Are you going to stand in tribulation?

You're going to stand against the antichrist? You can't even get out of

bed on a Sunday morning.

Jesus said in John 15 5, I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in me, and I am him, it is he who bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do it.

Father, we come to you this morning, and this is our prayer, Lord. Some in this room right now are going through hard things.

They are hard, they are difficult. Just knowing what I know in some of the lives of people here, Lord, I know there are some hard things to deal with. I know there are some little things you