

James 5: 7 - 11 // Patience

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[0:00] James chapter 5 verses 7 to 11. I want to turn your Bibles or tap and swipe and turn your hand in there. I want to start this morning by saying simply this.

I don't have it all together. I don't know that I've ever had it all together. Whatever all is, I have not had it. So if you come here this morning hoping to glean some wisdom from someone who's just, you know, magical, fantastic, no, you're looking at the wrong direction, okay?

So when I say, Lord, I pray they'll see more of you and less of us, it's a private prayer. Lord, I pray you'll see more of yourself and they would see more of you than anything I can present.

Because patience is a word that I think if we're honest with ourselves, it doesn't come easily. Maybe you're more perfect than I am, but it does not come easily for me. And so I find it cosmically funny that God has continued over the years to bring situations that have caused to stretch patience to an unbelievable amount where you are just forced to submit, to walk through the impossible, it seems, and to have patience that is beyond us.

No, it's not easy at all. I want things now. I want change now. I want to see people come to know you now without argument or years.

[1:35] But that's just not how it works. Patience means simply standing and staying put under pressure when it's easier to run away.

Different translations will call it different things. Endurance, steadfastness, it's all right. It's all correct. It's standing up under the weight of it, the weight of stress, when it's easier just to bail and leave.

And the Lord shows us patience like that. If I were God, I would look at my life, and I'm going to pick on myself and not you, if I would look at my life, and I would have pressed that smite button from heaven a long time ago, this is a waste of time.

But that is not what God does for you and me. And he's given us some amazing examples in this passage and the verses beyond that I'm not going to teach through today, but I will reference all the same.

Farmers, Elijah, Job, we have the prophets. There are examples that we can read that teach us patience in ways that we don't understand naturally very easily.

[2:47] So let me dive in. We're going to go verse by verse. 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 spring rains.

I don't have to tell this congregation that farming is hard and crops don't produce overnight. You all know this far better than I do. But it is something that we can learn from here because the farmer never gives up.

Without immediate results, the farmer continues and keeps on keeping on. That's patience. Especially when circumstances are completely out of your control.

Weather. I mean, seasons. These things are completely out of the farmer's control, yet they keep showing up to do the work. That is showing patience and standing up under something when it would be easier to pack it and say, nope.

Nope. Nope. Nope. I'm going to do something else. And as Christians, we need to wait upon God in that same long-hearted way. I'm sure believers at some point would look at this passage and say, but James, that was thousands of years ago.

[4:10] You know, where is Jesus now? You're saying he's coming soon, but he didn't come soon when this was written. Every generation has an expectation, should have an expectation, that Jesus is coming again soon.

And I will say this, and I don't like to go down conspiracy, you know, rabbit trails, because that's not what we're here for this morning, but I will say this. Never before has there been a convergence of prophecy, current issues, present situations, from earthquakes, wars of rumors of wars, again, on

and on and on and on as we have right now.

It would be hard to look at the world and all that is happening and not see the birth pains of something about to happen. So I do believe Jesus is coming soon. And I also accept that it may be my children's children's children's children's children's children's children before it happens.

And yet, I can't help but look around the world and just say, wow, something is afoot, and it's real.

The farmer waits because the harvest is valuable.

In so many ways, the farmer waits because the harvest is valuable. Galatians 6, 9 says, And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

[5 : 32] The farmer waits a long time for the crop to come with a reasonable hope of return.

Farmers are not stupid. They don't throw rocks in the ground and expect wheat to pop up.

They plant, they seed, they water, they nurture, they watch, they take care, and when the harvest time comes, they reap. God is like this, producing harvest in our own lives.

He doesn't give up when we give up. He doesn't give up when the heart starts to press down upon us and we start to lose our faith a little. Oh, come on, it's happened to you too.

Where your trust in God gets pressed and you start to ask yourself, Lord, where are you? I can't hear you, I can't see you. We've been in this moment.

Maybe we are in this moment now. Know that God is waiting, the harvest has come right in our lives, and it will be at that moment, at that moment, that we get it and it's made right.

[6 : 43] We need the ministry of the word of God and prayer to work the soil of our hearts to make us ready. Because, instead of getting impatient with God, and instead of getting impatient with ourselves, which can happen, we need to start looking at the fact that life can be long.

And because you've had a bad day, it doesn't mean you're a write-off. God does not look at us in our days that are in our worst seasons, and that becomes our character and defines who we are.

That's not how God approaches us. We tend to look at one another that way sometimes, but that's not the Lord's heart. He doesn't judge us by a bad day, because everybody has him.

we have to keep getting up. We have to keep standing up. We have to keep showing up. And in due time, the harvest will come.

Verses 8 to 9. 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.

[7 : 56] Behold, the judge is standing at the door. We have the expectation of his reward and justice, so we can establish our hearts.

When it means, when it says to establish our hearts, it doesn't mean just to have a positive attitude walking into a day. Today's going to be wonderful. I can feel it already.

I'm going to think positively. It's not like that at all. Establishing our hearts can only be done properly through the word of God and through prayer. It isn't a set of easy believisms.

It's not something we can doom scroll and find something encouraging and think, yes, I'm going to establish my heart on that. It's not establishing our hearts on the fleeting nature of the world. It's establishing our hearts rooted in the word of God, knowing that in season and out of season, his word is yes and amen.

His promises are true. And when we're out of season and it feels like things are going sideways, all wrong, and it's just simply dark, we can lean on his word and the examples that he gives us in his prophets and his people and see that dawn always comes.

[9 : 10] even if our darkest night happens, dawn is just around the corner. Jesus, I'm sorry, James knew that every generation should live with expectation of his return.

And another thing that a good farmer does, he doesn't quarrel with his neighbors. You have to look out for each other. Mario watches this YouTuber and there was this actually kind of encouraging story where one of their neighbors died, you know, and they all rallied together to harvest his crops and it ended up being the biggest yield financially that the guy would have ever seen.

And it's like a community rallied around to take care of their own. Farmers know this. We know this in church, don't we? When something happens, we rally around to take care of our own.

We come together to love one another in a way that expresses God's love through us, through our hands and feet, to take care of one another in times of need. The real catch in all of that is we have to admit our times of need, right?

We have to be willing to come and say, you know what, I need help. I really need help. This is a rough time. This is a rough day. And I need you. Let the church rise and come to you and love you

like brothers and sisters.

[10 : 33] Because impatience with God often leads to impatience with God's people. And this is a sin we have to avoid. When we're feeling like God is cool and distant, we have the temptation to become cool and distant with one another, to remove ourselves and isolate ourselves.

This is just something I've got to bear through. This is a problem I have. It's none of your business, none of your concern. I'm going to go through. Our isolation is our worst enemy at times. And you know, there's a few things you can learn from combat.

Okay? Funny enough, I hope this makes sense. But you know, when you're trying to wipe out an enemy line in front of you, you don't shoot to kill, you shoot to wound. because you know that that wounded person is going to take one or two other people to carry them off the line.

Now you have three people off the line. Okay? This is what our enemy does to us through despair, through lies. He isolates the wounded, pushes, makes sure they push themselves away or pushes them away if the community isn't loving enough.

No, we've got to stop doing that. because God is patient with us. We should be patient with one another. And if somebody's had a bad day, don't write them off. You know?

[11 : 52] You've known me long enough by now, I have my bad days. Thank you for not writing me off. Okay? We all have them, and it's okay. If we're too busy judging and gossiping about one another, when do we have time for the harvest?

It's like kicking back in my combine and just kind of thinking, no, you know? This is all going to happen by itself. No, it doesn't. It takes incredible amount of work, right? And community and togetherness takes work.

Having patience with one another takes work, because it takes forgiveness. It takes approaching one another with a gentle heart, with loving spirit. That takes work.

It's not our natural state of being, yet it's so very important. So, let's do the work together. when we experience injustice, it can make us less loving with one another.

And if you're like me, it's that once-bitten, twice-shy thing, you know? When we get hurt by someone, especially in church, we want to just kind of retreat, we build our walls up to protect ourselves.

[12 : 59] That's natural, people, but it's not right, and it's not helping you, and it's not helping the church. Be bold enough and brave enough to step through those walls and to be open with one another.

Verses 10 to 11, 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.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord and how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. The prophets were in the will of God in that they still experienced difficulty.

There's a great lie out there that it's like if you're in the will of God, everything is great. Yes, he provides. He sure has your back, but it doesn't mean you're not going to go through trials and difficulties.

The prophets did. We can be obedient. As we learned last week, the guys got into the boat before the storm out of obedience and the storm still came.

[14 : 08] It's the same with us. Satan will try to trick us to think that all suffering is due to sin and unfaithfulness. And I know in my own life, sometimes the product of my stupidity, the product of my sin, are the consequences of those things and it's not good.

I know that. But to blanket statement and say, oh, you're going through a rough time, you must be sinning. No, you're going through a rough time because you're human and maybe the Lord is using that tough time to build something incredibly unique into your life that you will be able to share with others.

Now, I haven't shared my whole testimony to this church yet, but I will just say this, that I grew up in a raging alcoholic household. It was abusive in every way you could imagine.

It was not good or easy. I was one of those kids who even in my young teens hid under my bed to avoid things.

All right? And after, years after, when I became a Christian, one of my first questions was, God, where were you? Why did I have to go through that?

[15:20] Why am I now, a 55-year-old guy standing here, still with the scars of those memories? Why? And you know what happened? I became a youth pastor. And as a youth pastor, I started counseling kids that were going through the same situation I was going through, from similar families.

I remember sitting across from this one guy and I was like, oh, Lord, okay, I get it now. I get it. You don't waste an ounce of the testimony. You don't necessarily pluck us out of a difficult situation because maybe we're supposed to go and help others through all of those other situations in years to come.

We don't see it at the moment, but that's what's happened in my life, and I've seen that in countless others as well. God turns beauty from ashes, but patience is a key ingredient, and not losing hope and trust in him are key ingredients because in his time, he who thinks eternally, he will make all things beautiful, even if we don't see it right now.

2 Timothy 3.12 says, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted. there will be a time where we are persecuted for our faith if you have not already experienced it.

And I'm talking even in the lunchroom having side comments, oh there's the Christian, right? Or have you ever had anybody where they swear in front of you and they say, oh, sorry reverend, you know? It's like it's condescending, you know?

[16:54] It's awful. And that's persecution in itself. So is being beheaded for your faith. No one should say to another, well, my persecution is heavier.

Persecution is persecution. All of it. But sometimes we need examples. Sometimes we need to see other people going through things.

You know, there was a website years ago, I don't even know if it still exists, but it was called the Demotivators. Demotivators. Have you ever been to a doctor's office or anything where it has these teamwork posters of guys rowing and stuff like, you know, we can do it together, you know, really impressive things like that.

The Demotivators kind of did the opposite of that. So there was one that had a picture of the Titanic half sinking, and it just said, maybe the purpose of your life is to be an example for others, you know?

And sometimes that's the case. But there's also wonderful examples for us in the Word of God of people who struggled with God and struggled with His calling.

[18:01] The prophets encourage us by reminding us that God cares for us, even if we're going through sufferings, especially when we're going there, and especially for His sake.

He cares for us in all times. And one of the examples is Elijah. Not Hernandez. Sorry, buddy. the prophet Elijah.

He told the wicked king Ahab that there would be three and a half years of drought. Ahab was a bad king. Bad. But isn't it interesting that Elijah himself would have to go through that drought?

He wasn't kind of kicking back in a hot tub while everybody else was going through it. He himself was going through this. He had to obey too. And God cared for him. God even gave him victory over the prophets of Baal.

And yet Elijah's story is interesting. We actually named one of our kids after Elijah because Elijah has been such an important part of my Christian growth in understanding God's character because Elijah struggled.

[19:05] He wasn't always on top of the mountain. He wasn't always in a happy mood. You know, it's quite reasonable to say that I think he struggled with some bipolar tendencies.

He would deliver a message from God and then he would find himself in the Kareth Ravine under a tree just asking God take my life. And God brought him food and a new task.

He went off and he challenged the prophets of Baal with the courage that is hard for us to even find today over smaller and larger things. Somehow Elijah did this in a way that just stuns me.

To challenge hundreds of prophets and God brought a pillar of fire down to prove God's existence, to prove that Elijah's word was his word. And you know what happens?

Elijah gets depressed and he runs away. Even after that. and he finds himself in this cave. Wind came, fire came, storm came, God's voice was not in it.

[20:17] And then a still small voice came. And you know what the words were? What are you doing here? See, Elijah kept on seeing incredible movements of God in the physical and in his heart and he still struggled with faith.

He still struggled to believe. He struggled with patience. He would say, I'm the only one left, I'm the only one of your prophets left. And God is like, no, you're not. There are many. You're okay, buddy. So we struggle with this patience too, you and me. There's a saying, or it has been said, the will of God will never lead you where the grace of God can't keep you. I think that's true. And we also have Jeremiah. Because some prophets, have hard times in the hands of unbelievers like Elijah did. And some prophets had difficult times in the hands of believers. And Jeremiah was arrested. He was thrown into an abandoned well to die. Rude. But God fed him and protected him.

[21 : 29] Even when there was a war, even when things seemed to be falling apart around him, God protected him. And Jeremiah had to be patient. So why is it that those who seem to do God's will go through difficulties?

Why is it? It doesn't add up in our earthly math, does it? If we obey, we should be rewarded. That's our earthly perspective.

But I heard it said a long time ago that God will lead us through things so that our words match our lives and our mission and our message. Okay? You know well what it's like to hear someone in your own life who say the nice words but their life doesn't add up to it.

Okay? I truly believe this is why us as believers have to go through difficult times so that when our message is ready, when our hearts are established, people will look at that and say, oh yeah, that's God.

yep, because the words match the message. I truly believe this because the impact of a faithful and godly life carries weight.

[22 : 44] Our patience in times of trouble is a testimony to those around us. Are we losing our minds and freaking out at people? Are we tearing people down with gossip and anger and hatred?

Or are we approaching them with patience? Who do you want to listen to yourself? Who do you want to hear the gospel from? The person who is tearing people apart in anger?

Or the person who is gentle and loving and patient? The obvious answer, of course, is those who are gentle and loving and patient. That's the Jesus way. I love that song.

It's true. That is the Jesus way. Gentle and lowly, loving and patient. when our Lord comes again, he will remember all of those who have been taken from us, who lives have been cut short.

Revelation 22, verse 12 says, Look, I'm coming soon. My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. The better we know the Bible, the more God can encourage us in the difficult experiences in life.

[23 : 56] the Bible is one of the worst marketing pieces for Christianity you could ever find. Let me explain before you throw a chair, okay?

I know what you're thinking. I agree with you. That was a dumb thing to say, but hear me out. The reason why is because you're allowed to question it. Nobody's going to kill you if you question it, okay?

You're allowed to be angry with God because there's evidence of here, of people being angry with God. And if you're in a situation right now where you feel angry, he's big enough, he made your emotions, he can handle them.

Don't be afraid to share those emotions with God, to cry out when you need to cry out. The other reason why it's a bad marketing piece is because it doesn't show people always at their best.

In fact, it's a long love story of people who failed consistently trying to get to know their Father in heaven. And so he provides an easy way, not easy for him, easy for us.

[25 : 03] That if we know in our hearts, we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and rose from the dead, we will be saved. need. We have the easy part.

So when someone is still coming to grips with that, when someone is still wrestling with that, and maybe argues against God, have grace for them. Have patience with them. If someone says to you, oh, I'll come to church, you know, and they've been saying that for the last ten years, just have patience.

You know? Pray for them. We have to be patient people. Because like the farmer, we keep working. Like the prophets, we keep sharing Jesus, no matter what the circumstances may be.

And you know what? You may be going through the worst trial of your life. Keep sharing Jesus, because people need to see that in you, too. And more importantly, you need to see that in you as well.

verse 11. Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You've heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you've seen the purpose of the Lord, and how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

[26:11] I think God balances privilege with responsibilities. Remember, we're his children. And if we always give our children everything they want, and we always say yes to them for everything they desire, you're raising a nightmare, not a child, right?

Oh, come on. It's true, right? I mean, if my parents had only given me what I asked for, and said yes, and never gave me any discipline at all, okay, I wouldn't have learned that there is a right and a wrong to things.

Kids need to know that saying no to them can be an incredibly loving thing to do. saying no is sometimes the thing that God does for us to show love.

No, son. No, daughter. I can see down your life about a year down the road, and what you think is pretty awesome right now, you're going to think is really stupid, but then just trust me, no. That's a good parent.

It's a good father. God. Job had no idea what was going on behind the scenes. He had no idea that Satan wanted to not just test him, but destroy his life.

[27:29] And God wouldn't allow that. He wouldn't allow Satan to go to the extent that he wanted to. He didn't. But Job had no idea about any of that. He just saw heartache.

He just saw difficulty. And he chose God in each and every way. Job's friends accused him of sin because they had the wrong idea. Well, if all this is happening, man, you must have really blown it. You need to repent. That's not what happened. Job was faithful. Job's wife was against him, encouraged him, Job, to curse God and die.

Now, I'm not going to get into a marriage commentary here, but I'll just say, you know, there are moments where it's like we look at our spouse and why are you the way you are? Why are you doing this?

Right? Give up. There's no point. So I have some compassion for Job's wife in a little way, right? Because she didn't see anything that's going on behind the scenes.

[28:29] She just simply saw calamity after calamity after calamity. And if she's believing that it's because of Job's mistakes, I can see her saying, smarten up, buddy. But that's not what was going on.

Job cried out to God and there was silence. And you'd think at moments like that when you're losing everything and you cry out to God, wouldn't you want to hear, it's okay, I got this.

Job didn't. I learned something valuable about this though through a TV show. Anybody remember the show Lost? Did you ever watch that show? No?

Okay. Well, this will be a brand new. Okay, thank you, man. This will be a brand new to some of you. Okay? In the show, there was a recovering heroin addict. Okay?

And one of the guys on the show just happened to have been someone who was a bit of a father figure to him. And he had taken his last little bit of heroin. And he said, you ask for this three times and I'll finally give it to you.

[29:33] Okay? And so, one time came. That was easy enough to get through. Second time, the withdrawal symptoms are starting to get a little worse. And he comes to him and says, I want it now.

This is it. So the father figure goes over and he shows him a cocoon. And he says, you know this moth is struggling right now? It's fighting for its life.

And I could take my knife and I could just nick a little bit of the cocoon and make this easier. Okay? I could actually free it right now, but it wouldn't be strong enough to survive its life.

And it's a valuable lesson for us to learn that sometimes when we are going through the most difficult thing we can possibly imagine and we say, God, where are you? Why are you not here? Why are you not helping me?

Sometimes he's just letting us grow within that cocoon so that when we break out, we'll be stronger and closer to him than we've ever been before. Yeah, he could nick that little cocoon.

[30:30] He could make it easier. But we wouldn't have learned what we need to learn. We wouldn't have been strong for what we need to be strong for. Keep in mind, God has an eternal perspective.

He sees years down the road. He sees our entire life laid out for us. Right now, we see whatever's in the slow cooker waiting for us at lunch. That's about how far we can look.

He sees further than that. So if we're going through a rough time, recognize that he's not breaking us out of that cocoon so that we can be stronger and closer to him.

See, Satan was banking on the idea that Job would get impatient. He was planning for this, that, oh, just wait. If I press him enough, Job's going to curse you, God. That's not what happened.

Job 13.15 says, Though he slay me, I will hope in him, yet I will argue my ways to his face. There's our freedom right there.

[31 : 34] You see, Job knew, I will trust and I will have faith to the very end. But I might argue with God along the way. Please release yourself and free yourself to argue with God.

I'm not saying be disrespectful. I'm not saying be faithless. I'm not saying to curse him. What I'm saying is bring your argument to him. It's okay to ask why.

Have the patience, though, to wait for the answer, because it may be a long while before you know the why of things. Have patience. Job ended up meeting God with greater blessings and a peace in his life.

And he came to God, he came to know God in a new and a deeper way through all of this. And when we find ourselves in the furnace, go to the throne of grace freely, boldly, and receive that mercy.

Hebrews 4, verses 14 to 16, and I'll close after this. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[32 : 55] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Remember that the Lord has a purpose in our trials and our troubles.

Remember, there is a purpose for our trials and our troubles, even if we don't see it today. We're not robots that are caught up in the wheels of fate.

We are God's children. You and me, we are sons and daughters of the Most High. And a good father waits with open arms for his kids. And God is waiting for you and me now, with open arms, waiting for his kids.

So let's be patient people. Like the farmer, we're waiting for a spiritual harvest, for fruit that will glorify God. Like the prophets, look for ways to share the truth of God, even when it hurts.

Like Job, we'll wait for the Lord to fulfill his purpose, knowing nothing is needless. nothing that is happening to us is without a reason. We just may not see it today.

[34 : 08] Let's pray.