

# The Complete Christian is Patient in Suffering

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] to the singers, to technical support, to the stewards, to one and all. It's nice to be back with you this morning after a couple of weeks away. It's nice to see Ann Noble and others back who have returned from having disappeared for a good number of months and weeks, and a few folk will still be disappearing as well, no doubt. We remember those on holiday. It will be a time of refreshment for them as well. Turn with me, please, to James chapter 5. We're coming to the end over the next couple of weeks in the book of James, and James is wanting to encourage. He's bringing his letter to an end, and he wants to encourage the people there, the scattered Christians, and that's what we're looking at this morning. If you can stay behind and help with the decorations this morning while you're looking at it, that would be great. That would be good if you're able to do that. That will save some time. I mentioned LaSalle's got COVID. I've not got COVID as far as I know.

I've been tested negative Saturday night and this morning, but I'm going to try and keep out your way. So if I don't embrace you, hug you, shake your hand, do whatever. If I go about with a bell around my neck, just in case, just in case. So bear that in mind, but I very seldom come down with anything really. But LaSalle usually catches it before me, and I sometimes get it. I thought I'd have caught it by now. She had it Monday, tested positive on Thursday, tested positive slightly again this morning. She's feeling a bit better, but just to warn you, I'll keep out your way as best I can.

Anyway, let's read James. James, we're up to chapter 5 and verse 7. Last time we looked at the warning to rich oppressors who were oppressing God's people. James reminds them of a day coming where all these senses of injustice will be righted, and now he wants to think of that same day, that day of judgment, but this time encourage God's people. So let's read from verse 7 through to verse 12.

James says, 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. All you need to say is a simple yes or no. Otherwise, you will be condemned. We'll end our reading at the end of that section. Let's come before God and ask for his help to study this together.

[ 3 : 16 ] Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, that we are those numbered amongst the redeemed this morning. We are yours. We are objects of your affection, the apple of your eye. Lord, you love us dearly. Despite, Lord, our waywardness, despite our weakness and our foolishness, despite, Lord, even our sin. Lord, our desire this morning, as we bring our studies to a close in this great book of the book of James, led by the Holy Spirit, Lord, we pray that we might have that desire to be better disciples, to be mature disciples, not just saved and satisfied, but saved and serving. So, Father, we pray that you would speak to us now. Encourage us in our faith, as James sought to encourage the early church. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm sure there are many things you like and don't like in life. There's one thing I don't really like in life, and it's standing in cues.

I just think it's just a waste. I used to have an elder who used to get really frustrated if he was on a long journey, and people would always ask him, so, how long did it take you? And he says, well, when you tell them, and you think, well, that was good, you did it in short time, he often used to say, well, what do you do with the time that you've saved? Have you done anything valuable with that extra half hour, or is it just an exercise and I got here quick? Waiting about in cues can be, I just think, it's one of a struggle, bus cues especially. That's why I took up cycling. But here's another cue that some cues are worth waiting in. This is in Alton Towers. We used to live near Alton Towers. Smiler had just opened up. I quite like these things. And I queued for an hour and a half. And the whole point, the wee smiley face, the whole theme of that ride is you go on miserable, and you come off with this big smile. It transforms you into this. Well, actually, I went on it smiling and came off miserable. It was such a painful, painful ride. And that was a cue that wasn't worth waiting in. Here's another cue that was worth waiting in. That's a cue for Wimbledon. Tennis isn't my favorite sport by far, but that's one of the best sporting events I've ever been to. I know

Margaret's been just recently. Wimbledon, it was such a great day out. And I couldn't believe I was actually going to get in. The cue was so long. And I thought, surely, this is a three-day-long cue.

But we managed to get in, and it was a great day. Waiting is not always the easiest thing, but some things are worth waiting for. Ask any Taylor Swift fan that was at Murrayfield recently.

Everyone would have said it was worth every minute waiting to go to that concert. As Christians, even this morning in July 2024, we are waiting. Every Christian is waiting. What are we waiting for? You know what you're waiting for. You're waiting for the return of the Lord. And that is something worth waiting for. And maybe you're consciously waiting. Maybe you're consciously hoping it's something that's in your mind, maybe even once a week or once a month, but you're thinking of this. And you are just aware, I cannot wait for the Lord's return. Usually, you feel these things when your body is weak and poorly, and you long for that new body. And that makes it sharpen your mind.

[ 6 : 59 ] Rest of the time, we just drift through. We know the Lord's coming back, but it never occupies our mind that much. We grin and bear it. We are good stoics. We think, well, life is hard. It's what it's like.

And we don't really focus on the second coming. James is bringing his letter to an end, and he wants to encourage them. And he wants to finish where he started. You remember verse 1, that the very first verse, he writes to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations. He talks about trials and tribulations, and he wants to encourage them. And you remember last time, when we looked at a day of judgment coming, God's people were being oppressed by the rich, and he wanted to encourage them, but he wanted to remind the rich there's a day coming when they will be judged, a day of slaughter. His words are very, very strong. Well, on the same theme, James now wants to encourage God's people, thinking of that day, the last days. Bad news for them, but very much good news for us. And it's a great way to end this letter. Not just keep going, but keep going for a reason. He says, right in verse 7, be patient then, brothers and sisters, until you're waiting for his coming. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. So that's what we're looking at the complete Christian, and we're looking at what it means to be mature. We've looked at many things. The thing that's important here is the Christian, the mature Christian is patient. I have the NIV 2011 edition. That's the heading in mind, patient in suffering. And that's very much sums up the mature Christian. Now, I wanted to look at this this morning, and I only have two main things. James' teaching easily divides into two. First of all, there is the encouragement for us, encouragement to persevere. That's what James gives us here, encouragements to keep going, and how we go about that. So first of all then, encouragements to persevere. I want to look at four things that James mentions in this passage. First of all, he wants to encourage them to keep going, because the Lord is coming. The Lord is surely coming. He mentions this in verse 7.

Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. And then he gives an illustration. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. The fact that James illustrates the coming of the Lord in using a farmer. He wants to drive home the certainty that there's a cycle. Things are working to clockwork, as it were, and the Lord has a plan in place. As he has a plan in place for the seasons, we're having a great summer.

This summer, they're holding on to it with both hands. It'll soon disappear. In autumn, we'll come, and you'll go, what summer? Things happen, cyclic. And so he mentions a farmer. And he's appealing to nature in many ways. He's basically saying it's dependable. The spring rains, the autumn rains, they will come. The farmer knows. And because the farmer knows this, he's got a crop that's very valuable. I cycle up quite almost every second or third day from Musselbrook up to Edgehead. And then I go down, and then I cut through these fields. I just love seeing the crops. There's one road I go up, and there's two different types of—I'm a Philistine when it comes to crop. One is yellow.

It's probably wheat or something. One is green and probably something else. Don't have a clue. Honestly, not a clue. Potatoes, I recognize them. But anyway, these things are growing, and you just think, wow, at some point, these are going to be ripe for harvest. They'll come up. The farmer knows they're coming up. He doesn't panic. He doesn't stress. But he knows it will come. He sows the seed.

[11:25] And as summer follows spring and autumn will come, there'll come a time in the year where he will reap the harvest, his valuable crop. And that is what James wants to impress upon us. That's why he illustrates that we're a farmer. It will surely happen. As the rains will come, and the farmer knows that the rains will come, he tells us to be like the farmer. It will surely happen. The wheels are in motion. The Lord will return. Remember when Jesus was taken up and the disciples stood gazing into heaven, perplexed, confused, lonely, maybe afraid, maybe anxious. And these angels, these bright ones, says, men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? You can almost see them anxious.

This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same manner you have seen him go into heaven. Acts 1, 11. That is what we're waiting for. That is sure and certain. It was prophesied. James obviously knows his Old Testament. He's a Jew. He's a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

And when he's talking about the rains here, he's quoting from Hosea 6, verse 3. This is not just an illustration that he's using. I think I'll use an illustration of a farmer. He's quoting Scripture.

Hosea 6, verse 3 says this, As surely as the sun rises, he will appear. He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. And James latches on to this. He will come. As the rains, as the cycles happen, as autumn will come and winter will come, by the grace of God, so the Lord will come. Look at nature.

He says, God is in control. There is a plan. As it will rain, and the sun will come, so the Lord will return. So that's the first thing. The Lord is coming. Secondly, he says, the Lord is coming soon.

[ 13 : 35 ] Verse 8, You too be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. In the last sermon that I preached here a few weeks ago, verse 3, James uses a wee expression called the last days in verse 3.

You have hoarded, speaking to the rich, non-believer, non-Christian, you have hoarded wealth in the last days. The Bible has a lot to say about the last days. The last days are the beginning of the end.

It's a sign that the end is approaching. When Jesus came, that was the beginning of the end. Everything was heading towards the coming of Jesus. When he arrived, it signaled the beginning of the end, the beginning of the last days. That's why his first words publicly, in terms of preaching, were repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. Near. And Jesus did this. He came to live a spotless life, to fulfill righteousness. He did that for you and I. He came to die. He came to atone for our sins. He rose again. He is seated at the Father's right hand, and there he awaits the time to return.

The way back to God is now open. But one day Christ will return. There are no new prophets. There are no new message. There is no other great thing about to happen. The only great thing that's still to happen is the Lord will return. It's not Trump becoming president in November or whatever. It is the Lord's return. That is the last great big event that we are waiting for. And that is what the writer to Hebrews says, in the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets in many times various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. We are living in the last days. The coming of Christ signaled the beginning of the end. There's no new major event to happen apart from the coming of Jesus Christ again.

And meanwhile, the good news has to be preached. Meanwhile, the good news has to be preached. The Holy Spirit, if you—I preached through the book of Acts. I loved preaching through that.

[ 16 : 12 ] There's a wee refrain all the way through the book of Acts, and the Word of God spread, and the Word of God spread. And the Word was preached. And as the Word spread, people, nations were being saved. It's quite something. Jesus says this, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. We are living in the last days. The gospel has to be preached.

Then the end will come. That is why James can say the Lord's coming is near. That's why you can say it. It is near. I mean, to the man in the street, the near might be next week or whatever. James, or Paul and Peter and the apostles encountered, well, where is the coming? The church at Thessalonica, the church is there. Well, we heard. We're saved. We've repented. We've believed. The Lord's coming back. What happens to those who have died? They expected it to be there and then. Where is his coming? People would scoff. In the last days, Peter says, people will say, where's his coming? He promised. Ever since our ancestor died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word, the heavens came into being, and the earth was formed out of water. By the same word, the present heavens and the earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment. And he reminds us, he goes on to say, Peter, that with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Every time I think of that verse, he is patient, not wanting anyone to repent and wanting anyone to perish. I remember my wife singing in Soho one Sunday morning. I don't know if I mentioned that to you. There was a, when you were minister, the guy that I replaced in London, went to Soho, planted the church there, and right in the middle of Soho, Brewer Street, right in the very center, where you've got all the strip joints and so forth. And there was a wee church that used to meet there, and Lucille would sing in a part-a-car on a Sunday morning, thinking, this place has probably just fallen asleep in the past hour. Goodness knows what was happening here on that night, and all the sin and debauchery.

And yet, parked the car, and went in, and Lucille was singing in this church service. And just, just the sheer contrast, in the midst of Soho, there was this wee church praising God on a Sunday morning, when anything but that was happening on a Saturday night. God, and it was a sunny day, and I remember thinking, God has allowed the sun to rise in Soho, and to grant them salvation. He doesn't want even sinners to repent, but everyone to be saved. And it's, it's, it's, although we think, Lord, I wish you'd come tomorrow, there are people I want to be saved. There are people you want to be, and every day is a day of grace for them to be saved. So, though we say, come, Lord Jesus, in a sense, Lord, save, save before you come. And that is what's happening here. That's why he says, the Lord's coming is near. John says the same thing, right at the end of Revelation, quoting Jesus, look, I am coming soon. My reward is with me. I will give to each person according to what they have done. Revelation 22, 20, he who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming soon. Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus. The second coming is nearer today than it's ever been. And that is the most exciting thing. It may be this week, we do not know. And when he comes, it will be full salvation for his people.

[ 20 : 05 ] Matthew 24, he will send his angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. He will gather his people. He will come with rewards for his people. Matthew 16, for the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person to what they have done. We don't know what that will look like, and this is such a big topic, but he mentions this, but the greatest reward, surely, is to be with the Lord himself. John 14. Don't let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am, to behold his glory. We will be like him.

1 Thessalonians 4. I do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope. We believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him according to the Lord's word, so that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will ever be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

Will we be caught up to meet the Lord in the air? That's better than any ride in Alton Towers. I just caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There's not a theme park ride can match that.

That is a ride worth waiting for. It really is. I long for that day. If we're still alive, we will rise to meet him, and the dead will be raised before us, and we will meet together in the air to meet the Lord. No wonder, Paul says, encourage one another with these words. That's an event worth waiting for. Thirdly, he also says, the Lord is working through us. He doesn't just give the illustration of patience as a farmer. He now moves to patience as a prophet. He looks, he says, look at the prophets. Take us an example of patience in the face of suffering, because he knows they're suffering. Take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. In other words, they're suffering, they're struggling. Life is hard for whatever reason, persecution or poverty or whatever, and it's one thing to say, look at the farmer, it's coming. But then they're saying, but I'm finding it hard. So he says, well, now look at the prophet. Look at how prophets suffered. And he looks especially at the Pope, and he wants to encourage them in this. We're not prophets, but we are servants of the Lord.

It's good to remind yourself of even the best book of kings just now, amongst, I'm in Matthew as well, if you're using the same reading as me. My favorite characters. I look forward to meeting Elijah, having a coffee with Elijah. That would be good. Just a little, baldy guy. I'm quite keen to meet him as well. That would be quite good. Two fiery prophets of the Lord. But these guys had such a hard time. Moses, 40 years, moaned and whinged at. And Jeremiah, we looked at that a few weeks ago on a Sunday evening, the weeping prophet. Lord, I'm struggling with this. This is hard. Daniel, cast into a den of lions, even the apostle Paul, even Jesus, taken apart, taken aside by his disciples and says, you really need to sort yourself out, Jesus. We don't get this. And he has to rebuke them and the persecution he received as well.

[ 24 : 05 ] It is not easy to live as a Christian in 2024 with all the legislation, but just the aches and pains. So we are called not just to be saved, but to serve. And we need to serve before he comes.

As I mentioned this, the gospel has to be preached to Timothy 4, Paul's last letter. He says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. There's a crown laid up for me.

I want to be able to say that. I don't know how long I'll go. I just discovered this this week that my daughter's wee baby's going to be a boy after having two girls. I'm a dog with two tails.

I just, I just, I just, I was in John Lewis. That's how sad it was yesterday. Looking at baby clothes with my wife. She's looking at clothes. I'm looking at wee mobile gadgety things. And, and I thought, wow, that, that's, that's just, that's just going to be great. And then Ray Reardon died at 91, I think he was. And then I thought, I'm 64. I was 64 last Sunday. Lucille and I were, have our birthday on the same day. She's 61. She's three years younger than me, but 64.

And I thought, he's 91. I could live for another 20 or 30 years. I expect to see this wee baby and then pop my clogs. And I thought, I could, I could see this baby grow up to be married, to have children of themselves. That just blows my mind. I just thought, I could be a great grandfather. I'm just not ready for that. I'm not ready to be a grandfather. And I thought, nah, that's never, even now, I still don't believe that's going to happen. I think maybe when they're eight or nine. I've taken it on insurance policy. Why am I telling you this? I took an insurance, an insurance policy till I was 65. After 65, I get nothing. So I'm saying, Lord, if you're taking me, let it be this year.

[ 26 : 01 ] Speaking as a Scotsman, I don't think Lucille would have that. But you just never know, do you? And you think, how long will it be until the Lord returns? But until then, we work. I have finished the race. I have fought the good fight. I want to be able to say that, not just that I survived, but that I served the Lord. I want to hear, well done, thou good and faithful servant. Not just as a pastor, but in the local church, whatever that is, the Lord has saved you for service.

So James says, while the Lord's coming, don't just look at the farmer and be encouraged by him. Look at the prophets. It was hard for them, but look at them. Fourthly, he says, he wants to remind him that not only is the Lord working through his, but the Lord is good. God's people have always wrestled with the problem of suffering, Job especially. He struggled with us. You know the story of Job very well. He lost everything, family, possessions, the whole lot. And you know how that finished. I don't need to drag this out for you. You saw, and he talks about the blessing that Job received. You know how the end result, the end result was good. Job 42, after Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. And if you do the math, twice as many cows and sheep and so forth, but not children. The children, he doesn't get twice as much. And as I heard a sermon in this, you don't get twice as much, especially if your children are saved because you never lose them. They are safe with the Lord. He just got the same number again, and in effect doubled because they were never lost. His possessions were lost. His house was lost.

He got twice back, but not his family. They were already safe with the Lord. And that's what James wants to remind us of. Look at how it finishes. It's not like Smiler, where you come off. Wow, that was a waste of time. It's like Wimbledon. It shall be worth it. You go in, it's a great experience. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. The best is yet to come for God's people, and it is worth the wait. Revelation 21, I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look, God's dwelling is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. The Lord knows there are tears in their eyes. That line struck me in the song we sang, days of darkness may be on me or whatever it says. Just days of darkness might still be ours, but he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death. For the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making it. Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. The Lord is good. So that's what James wants to encourage the people with. The Lord is coming. He's coming soon.

He's working through us to bring the end about as we serve him, and he is good. The ride is good. It is worth waiting for. But secondly, in the light of all of this, attitudes that we should adopt. What should our attitude be in July 2024? Four things very quickly. First of all, be patient. James mentions it right at the start. Verse 7, be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. He tells them that in times of distress, when their wages were withheld, that's the context of this. They were poor. They were struggling to make ends meet. They were under persecution from people outside. And what can believers do in those situations? The honest answer is, not a lot. Sometimes there's not a lot you can do.

There's no silver bullet given to us in life that can fix things. I'm still speaking to myself the sermon I preached on a few Sunday evenings, Jeremiah, where Jeremiah says, you deceived me, Lord. I expected this, but I got that. And the Lord hadn't deceived them. The Lord says to him, I will be with you. I will help you. And life is hard, but I will fortify you, and I will keep you. And that is life. That is—we might feel that the promises ring hollow. They're not 16 ounces to the pound. We know what you've said, Lord, but can't you do this? And the Lord doesn't work that way. We go through the storm, but the Lord is with us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. So, we do this not blindly. We do it in hope. We walk in faith. Hebrews, faith is confidence in what we hope for, the assurance of what we do not see. Like Noah, we build the ark even before the rains come. And we trust the Lord. Things that we do not see, things that are not tangible as yet, we endure them with patience. The ability to endure is seeing things long term. The farmer endures because the rains will come. The rains will come. The spring rains, the autumn rains, the rains that he needs for the valuable crop. That is how we endure. We have to look at the long term. We have to be able to see that. The farmer that respects natural laws will have peace. The farmer that doesn't gets anxious and troubled and depressed and afraid.

[ 32 : 02 ] So it is with the Christian. We trust a God who's sovereign, who's in control, who can help us in a broken world, in a fallen world, a world that's groaning, where you're groaning, your body's groaning. You want to be re-clothed with a new body. The person who can see past this to a glorious body, to heaven and glory, will persevere. A person who can rest in the love of God, and a Savior, whoever lives to make intercession, in the Holy Spirit, who gives us a peace that passes understanding, will patiently endure. The whole creation is groaning. Verse 23, Paul says in Romans 8, we ourselves have the first fruits of the Spirit. We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. We are not just waiting casually, we're eagerly waiting. We're waiting in hope. But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently, Paul says in Romans 8, 25. We do this. Hear the words of Jesus. I am coming soon. Revelation 3, hold on to what you have, so that no one may take your crown. Paul says it, Peter says it, John says it, Jesus says it.

Wait. Wait. Wait patiently. Persevere. Secondly, stand firm. Stand firm. You too be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. This standing firm will only happen when we are persuaded of what lies ahead, what makes you stand in a queue for 90 minutes at Smiler, because you think the ride's going to be worth it. You can be disappointed if your hope is in the wrong things. We will never be disappointed. We stand firm, whether it's waiting to go into Wimbledon or whatever. We stand firm for entry into heaven, for the Lord's return. That's what makes us stand, what makes us persevere. Jesus says in John 16, 33, I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Paul says to Titus, for the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled and upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope. This hope of a spotless heaven, of seeing the Savior, should cause us to want to live godly lives, to stand firm in our faith, not to say, well, he's not coming, I can do whatever I want. Peter says in 2 Peter 3, since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. You want the Lord to come, you look forward to it, you want to live godly lives, to speed his coming.

So we are to stand firm, stand firm as godly men and women. Thirdly, don't grumble. Don't grumble against each other. Verse 9. So while we're waiting for the second coming, we are not to grumble. It's a sign that we're discontent. I'm glad my daughters have grown up. I used to drive me nutty when I took them a car ride, and are we there yet? We used to drive from here all the way down to the middle of France, or the south of France, and you used to hear, are we there yet? Are we there yet?

[ 36 : 01 ] Impatience. Say, yeah, we'll get there. If only you knew. It's a long journey. It'll take a good few hours, or whatever. Or like kids stuck indoors on a rainy day, nothing much to do. You've given them the one-hour activity that's now passed. It's only 10 in the morning, and they're ready to wreck the joint. And you think, how am I going to survive? They're bored. I need to keep them doing something.



That's why when the kids come in on Monday, there'll be stuff for them every day. I think it'll be a very enjoyable experience for them, as well as teaching the Word of God. They'll be playing games, and it will be a good time for them. We can easily grumble and complain, I don't like it. We can gurn, and we can do that with each other. It's a sign that we're not happy with a lot. And we can take this out in others. Whereas, if we, as individuals, stand firm, looking forward to that day, knowing the Lord's coming is near, the judge is at the door. And that's what James really wants to mention here. The judge is, if he's standing at the door. I used to dread my mom and dad coming back. Whenever they left us, when we were youngsters, I'll be back in two hours. And it was me and my brother. My brother's coming here today. We'll probably tell him this anyway. I remember. Shall I tell you this? Anyway, we used to just go up to mischief all the time. Something would get broken in the house at one time, and we had a radiogram showing my age now. I hit it with a catapult. Who uses a catapult indoors? But anyway, this thing was smashed. I can't remember who did it, whether it was him or I. But I remember we were fighting and squabbling my brother and I, and the goldfish got knocked over. This fan-tailed goldfish.

And in my efforts to try and find it, I think he stood on it. And he picked his foot up, and there was this goldfish dangling from his foot. So we put the goldfish back in the goldfish bowl.

And I think I took the blame, because he'd already get into trouble. Two strikes and you're out. Yeah, mom, it was me. I killed the goldfish. There was always something you had to confess every time my mom and dad went out. And what James is basically saying, don't get into trouble until the Lord returns. He's standing at the door. You used to dread. There's a key going on. No, you'd sit there for a whole hour, dreading or coming back, because you knew you were going to get a rocket. You were going to be disqualified from receiving some treat that week. And the key, I can still hear it. It sends a shiver. There's the door going. No, here we go. This is the thing.

We've all got your story right. This is what's going to happen. The Lord's standing at the door. We don't have time to grumble with each other. The Lord's coming is near. Fourthly, don't swear.

[ 38 : 43 ] This is a confusing verse. Commentators can't quite get their head around why they mentioned this at this time. Oaths. It just seems a bit strange. But basically, two possible reasons why people would swear oaths. The Bible speaks against misusing God's name as a lever to say, well, as God says, I stand in... They do it in courts. We swear by Almighty God the evidence we shall give.

I always think that's the strangest thing. I mean, the amount of legislation that comes out from government that's anti-God, and yet the COVID inquiry, they'll still have somebody swearing on a Bible or whatever. There's no consistency there at all. But you're appealing to someone bigger than you that what you're saying is true, and God is a witness. And people can use the name of God to leave it for his leverage in the law court. And I think James is maybe mentioning that to them.

Instead of trying to manipulate things for your own end in the law courts, as he's mentioned this earlier, wait on the Lord. Trust in the Lord. Do not use God as a lever to try and get your own way.

It's very tempting to do that. Do not do this. Do not misuse the name of the Lord in a legal sense, or perhaps do not misuse the name of the Lord just in a personal way to try and boost your own integrity. Well, the Lord knows I am an honest man, and I'm telling you that this is the way that it is.

If you're a mature Christian, which this whole letter is about, just let your yes be yes, and your no be no. And if you're a man or a woman of God, if you say something, that should stand. Your word is your bond. Well, John said it. He's a man of God. I believe that. That's what James is basically saying here.

[ 40 : 32 ] You don't use God to manipulate people or situations towards your end. We don't know exactly why James has mentioned this, but that is some of the suggestions why that might be the case.

Jesus spoke out against us. Do not swear, Matthew 5, an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is God's throne, or by the earth, it's his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair of your head, white or black. All you need to say simply, yes or no, anything beyond that comes from the evil one. It's as simple as that. We do not misuse the name of the Lord while we try and cope with things here. So what we said, the Lord is coming, and that should be your encouragement. That is worth waiting for. In the midst of trials, encouragement to persevere, he is surely coming. He is coming soon. It's nearer now than it's ever been. He is working through us as prophets, as servants of God, and the end result will be good.

But the attitudes that we should adopt is we are to be patient. Be patient. Wait. Wait and hope. Wait and hope. Embrace what is surely to come. Stand firm as a man or woman of God. Don't grumble in your situation or against others, and do not swear by God. Do not manipulate things. Manipulate God to try and make things easier for yourself. So this is James wanting to encourage these believers going through our time. The Lord is coming. I don't know what you're going through. I don't know how.

I'm 64. I feel I'm beginning to creak a wee bit. I don't know what lies ahead. The way I cannot see that there's one who is my guide, and he'll show the way to me. These are great truths. These are the things that keep us going. Not just the end of 2024, but beyond that. We lift our eyes heavenward.

[ 42 : 41 ] We look to heaven and glory, and that is worth waiting for. Even if the weight is painful and it's sore, it is worth waiting for. And that's what James, that's what Paul, that's what John, that's what Peter wants to encourage one another with these words. We're going to stand and sing an old song. I cannot tell why he whom angels worship. I like this because there's quite a few things I do not know. I cannot tell. I cannot tell this, this, this, and this. But this I know. I like the this I know. Often when we sing, up from the grave for your rose, and we get those verses, yeah, yeah, yeah.

But when it comes to, but this I know, there's things I cannot tell. But there are loads of things I do know. So when you come to these parts of the verses, give it big licks, and we'll see how we do.

Let's stand and we'll sing together. Let's stand and we'll sing together.

Let's sing together.

As with His peace He raised this bliss of tears For how His heart upon the cross was broken The crown of pain to three and three years But this I know, He heals the broken hearted And stays our sin and comes our lurking fear And this is hidden from the heavy laden For yet the Savior, Savior of the world is here I cannot tell how little in the nations How He proclaim His earthly heritage

[ 45 : 39 ] How satisfied in His own aspirations Of east and west, of sinner and of seed But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory And He shall reap the harvest He has sown And some glad day His sun shall shine His splendor When He, the Savior, Savior of the world is sown We cannot tell how long the last you worship When an act is made, a dream is your mistake For you can see, a great jubilation

When all the hearts of men with love are filled And this I know, all the skies will flow with rapture And near and near, a gloomy voice will sing And after Him, and after Him, will answer And last, the Savior, Savior of the world is here Let's close by hearing words which are sure and certain Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling And to present you before His glorious presence Without fault and with great joy To the only God, our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority

Through Jesus Christ our Lord Before all ages, now and forevermore And all God's people  
said Amen Amen Please be seated