

James 25-05-04b

As we continue our study this Sunday, looking at James' emphasis on patience, he leads with it in chapter one, as we have seen, verses three and four, let patience have its perfect work. Knowing the testing of our faith is going to produce that patience. If we want patience, and we're going to live a patient life, we anticipate that there will be tests of our faith.

They go hand in hand. One produces the other. Patience will have its perfect work in us, making us mature and complete, and we don't lack anything that we need to serve God, to represent Him, to live a life that pleases Him.

You come over to chapter five. Be patient, brethren, verse seven, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and the latter rain.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Waiting for the coming of the Lord, the way the farmer waits patiently for the fruit of his labors, the seed that has been planted, the soil that has been tilled and cultivated.

He continues in verse nine, do not grumble against one another. This is the enemy of patience, is getting eyes on people, eyes on self, eyes on circumstances. Subjectivity is the enemy of patience.

So hand in hand with being patient is don't grumble. Don't find fault with one another. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.

As soon as we start finding fault, grumbling, complaining, and condemning someone else. Remember when Jesus said, judge not lest you be judged, for the judgment with which you judge others is the judgment that will fall on you. Whatever you have assigned to them, that is going to come back on you.

This is a reflection of that teaching. Behold, the judge is standing at the door. See the connection to thinking about the coming of the Lord.

When we think about the coming of the Lord, we are much more concerned with how are we going to hold up under evaluation, rather than putting ourselves on the judge's seat and imagining how others hold up. Anticipating the coming of the Lord is an antidote to subjectivity. I'm not going to grumble and complain.

I'm not going to have my eyes on others. When I have my eyes on the Lord and His quick return, it is at hand. Am I ready? That's what I want to think about.

I let that other guy over there. To his own master, he stands or falls. Who am I to judge someone else's servant? I'm a servant.

James opens with this. James, of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, slave, servant. That's how I view myself.

That's how we should view ourselves. Behold, the judge is standing at the door. The coming of the Lord is at hand.

My brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patience. Suffering and patience. Remember when we went back to Matthew chapter 5 last time and looked at the Lord Jesus in the Beatitudes, when He says in chapter 5, rejoice and be glad for so they treated the prophets.

People want to say Christians are supposed to be prophetic. Look at what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 about prophets. Therefore, we should be prophetic.

When in verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 5, you remember this from last time, blester you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. These are people who aren't heeding James' exhortation to don't judge others, don't complain or grumble against others. Blester you when you are the object of that from others who are in a state of failure.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad in verse 12 for great is your reward in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. When you are the recipient of persecution and you bear it patiently without grumbling, without rancor, without a response in kind, great is your reward in heaven. The reward in heaven comes at the coming of the Lord.

The judge is at the door. The coming of the Lord is at hand. So let the reality of the hope of reward be uppermost and it will squelch, drive out and eliminate subjectivity and a desire to push shame and blame on others, however justified it may be.

It isn't a matter of are they guilty or not. It's a matter of what's going on in my soul. Doesn't really matter what's up with them.

What's up with me? So, do you see a similarity here between Jesus' words in Matthew 5, 11 and 12 and what James says here in his chapter 5, verse 10 and 11? My brethren, take the prophets. They spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as an example of suffering and patience.

Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. Why do we count them blessed? Because Jesus said we are blessed when we endure. You've heard of the perseverance of Job.

You've seen the end that was intended by the Lord, the purpose that was intended by the Lord. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful. Don't try to get recompense or justice or good treatment from people.

Look to the Lord. He is all-powerful. He is our Heavenly Father.

He is gracious, compassionate, merciful. But above all, verse 12, my brothers, do not swear by

heaven or by earth or with any other oath. Let your yes be yes and your no be no, lest you fall into judgment.

And what a close parallel is that to the words of the Lord Jesus. We'll see that in detail when we get to chapter 5. But you remember Jesus telling the Pharisees, don't swear by the gold on the altar. Don't swear by the throne in heaven.

Let your yes be yes, let your no be no. Don't be taking oaths as though you need to reinforce your word. When you say a thing, it should be gold.

It doesn't need reinforcement. It doesn't need assurance. If you say yes, that's a firm yes.

That's a commitment. If you say no, that is a firm statement. That is an absolute denial and it doesn't need reinforcement.

But patience, let patience have its perfect work. So what did Job say? James mentions Job there in chapter 5. We'll see it upcoming. Job 14, 14, among many passages, we'll just give one out of Job.

The patience of Job is legendary. It is a given. A given.

14, 14 of Job, if a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service, I will wait until my change comes. Job's answer to that question, if a man dies, will he live again? Is there a resurrection? Job says, absolutely. And that's what I'm waiting for is the resurrection.

When is the resurrection that Job awaits? The coming of the Lord. The judge is at the door, even in the Old Testament day. The faithful saints like Job considered their resurrection, their transformation, their change, their promotion into the eternal future.

14, 14 of Job, if a man dies, shall he live again? The assumed confident answer is yes, absolutely. Therefore, all the days of my hard service, my difficulty, my challenge, my suffering, that which would make others angry, frustrated, eager to vent, all the days of my hard service, I will wait. I will wait patiently.

I will wait with endurance, with fortitude, with forbearance, with eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured. Anytime somebody said it was shameful, he despised that. He despised the shame.

He didn't let that intrude into his thoughts. The joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and he didn't let any negative part of that intrude into his considerations. Where is he now? Seated at the right hand of the Father.

His eternal reward is now in his possession. I will wait until my change comes, until my turn comes, till my resurrection comes, my promotion and advancement into the future, opportunities for service and reflection of God's glory. That's what was real to Job.

That's what should be real to us. In Job 17, verse 9, the righteous will hold to his way. He'll stick, he will stay, he will be steadfast.

And he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger. What Jesus said about those who receive the word with patience, a good and noble heart, clean hands, strength upon strength. 17, 9 of Job, the righteous will hold to his way.

And he who has clean hands will become stronger and stronger. Psalm 37, verse 1, do not fret yourself when you look at other people, evildoers. Do not be envious of those who are trying life another way.

They're doing it by working iniquity. The old King James, fret not thyself because of evil men, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. Verse 7 of that same Psalm 37, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.

Rest in the Lord, de-stress, cast your cares upon him, drop your burdens at the door of the tabernacle. Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way.

I look over to the left or to the right, and I see someone who I think has it better than me. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of people who have other sets of priorities, bring wicked schemes to pass. Psalm 40, verse 1, I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined to me, and he heard my cry.

We have a choice of making our life about people, self, and circumstances, or making it about the Lord. Where am I before the Lord? What is his evaluation of my heart? Does he find it good and noble? Proverbs 16, verse 7, when a man's ways please the Lord, he will resolve the conflicts. He will make even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Proverbs 19, 11, the discretion of a man, we've seen this in Proverbs over and over again, the inculcation of that wisdom, what it is you know, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience. The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression. Even when others are guilty, even when you're justified in recognizing fault, failure, shortcoming, some other problem that other people have, the glory of a person is to overlook transgression in others.

Hold it not to their charge, as Stephen said about those who were stoning him, lay it not to their charge. Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 3, oft quoted, when you love prophecy, this comes to your mind quite often. The vision is yet for an appointed time.

The coming of the Lord is yet future. It may be near, but it's future. The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end, it will speak, and it will not lie.

Though it tarries, wait for it, because it will surely come. It will not tarry. It's a fascinating verse, looking at Habakkuk 2, 3, the vision is yet for an appointed time.

At the end, it will speak, and it will not lie. Though the vision tarries, wait for it. It will surely come, and it will not tarry.

Though the vision seems to tarry, it's actually not tarrying. It is coming at the appointed time, and at the appointed time, there will be no delay. We assume there is a delay.

There's not a delay. God has a perfect schedule. The testing, the hardship, the trial of our faith that produces patience is on schedule.

From our perspective, it seems to tarry. Fulfillment, advancement, consummation, the enjoyment of blessings and fulfillment of promise from God seems to be delayed, but it is for an appointed time, and when that appointed time comes, there is no tarrying at all. Everything that happens is on God's perfect schedule.

Do you want Him to adjust to our plan, or should we adjust and adapt to His plan? What seems like a delay is not a delay. The timing is perfect. God's timing is perfect.

It will surely come, and it will not tarry. You have tarrying and not tarrying, both in the same verse. It's fascinating to look at.

We endure to the end to be delivered, Matthew 10, 22. Even if you're hated by all, for my name's sake, he who endures to the end will be delivered. Matthew 11, 29, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. When you try to put a harness on a dog, even though the dog loves to be walked, loves the freedom of going out and getting into nature and sniffing and smelling and reading the pee mail and so on, many of them struggle when you try to put the harness and the leash on them, and yet that is the means by which they are going to enjoy greater freedom. They're going to get out of the yard and out of the house, and yet they brook and reach around and want to chew the leash.

Dog, do you not understand? This is what you're looking forward to, putting this harness on and putting this leash on is what is going to enable you to enjoy much greater things. When Jesus says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, we sometimes can find it tedious or I don't have time for that, I'm busy. The yoke is what gives us freedom.

It's almost a contradiction in terms, taking the yoke of the Lord Jesus upon us, getting into harness, it is what enables us to enjoy these tremendous fulfilled promises and blessings. Galatians chapter six, verse one, if you do find someone in the periphery overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering lest you also are tempted. Don't let the failure of someone else become an occasion to stumble and fall yourself.

You have to work on restoration, on healing, on upbuilding, reconstitute the team lest you also are tempted. Verse nine of that same chapter, Galatians six, nine, let us not grow weary while

doing good for in due season, we shall reap if we do not lose heart. If we do not become impatient, if we don't become subjective, patience, having its perfect work so that we are perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Finally, first Thessalonians five, 14, this is our last passage, this is our close. Paul says, we exhort you, Thessalonian brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with everyone. Some may be unruly, some may be faint of heart, some may be weak, be patient with everyone.

Patience, this enables us to be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Fit, able, effective representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth, in line for opportunity, for future function, future service, future reflection of God's glory at the coming of the Lord, the judge is at the door. Do you want to look to the judge and be ready when he judges, or do we want to look at others and try to judge them ourselves? Anytime we are tempted to be impatient, stop and think, the Lord is at hand, the coming of the Lord is near, the judge is at the door.

I don't have time to worry about that person over there, those people over there, this point of view, this set of cultural influences, and priorities, and what's happening politically, what's happening culturally, what's happening within Christianity. I don't have time for that, the judge is at the door. Did you ever notice how whatever your machinations and opinions are about other things, when there's a knock on the door, and you're expecting the person, and they're knocking, where does all of the focus land? My guest is at the door, the person I'm waiting for is at the door, the much anticipated arrival is here.

I'm no longer thinking about stuff that's outside. Am I ready to greet the one who is at the door? That should be our response when we are subjected to various trials, it's a positive thing. I judge it positive, I'm going to judge circumstances that are tough as a positive, and an occasion for rejoicing, because my judge is at the door.

See the connection? What should I be judging? Not people, my own circumstances, and my response, and my function within them. Am I ready? I'm going to judge these circumstances as an occasion to rejoice. There's my judge.

Wonderful, practical theology. James is above all things practical, and we'll see why when we continue our study next week, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how powerfully it addresses us right where we live, equips us for every good work, defends us, gives us the shield of faith, enables us to be girt about with power and strength, have all of the accouterments of the armor that you provide us. We pray that as we reflect on this passage and look at ourselves and our circumstances, that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to prevail, to be overcomers, to be those who have a good and noble heart, in line for opportunities both now and in the ages to come, to be effective witnesses to the amen.