

May 11, 2014

Coping with Suffering Through Patience

James 5:7-11

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 5:7-11

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸ You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. ¹⁰ As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

James is returning to the same theme that he started the book with. That is that we are exposed to many hardships and trials in our lives. He wrote to tell the dispersed Christian Jews (and in turn, us) how to deal with these trials.

James 1:1-4

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹ James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

He wrote "to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad." which would be the converted Christian Jews. This is pretty much what Christianity was at this point. There wasn't much inclusion of Gentiles during this period. They were called "scattered" because they had dispersed outside of Jerusalem due to

persecution. Since they were spread out, this became the means by which the Gentiles were introduced to Christianity.

As I prepared this sermon, I thought how appropriate this message was to our group here in Greenwood. We have been inflicted with **so** many “sufferings” such as:

- Strokes
- Cancer
- Heart Problems
- Migraine Headaches
- Depression
- Bad Knees and Hips
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Pneumonia
- Sciatica (SIGH ATTIC UH)
- Shingles
- Death in the Family
- Finances
- Jobs
- Etc., etc., etc.

One might ask, “Why do so many problems happen to good people?”

Romans 8:28

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God,

And what was the good that was promised?

Romans 8:29

“That we would be conformed to the image of His Son”. We would become more like Christ. Well, here it is again.

James is talking about your trials. He is talking about my trials. He is not talking about a specific trial, but ALL trials that occur in our lives. He promises us “that the testing of your faith produces endurance (or PATIENCE). ⁴ And let PATIENCE have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Do trials feel good? NO! There is a reason that we do not call them blessings. We identify **blessings** as something that **feels good**. We call **hardships, trials**, because they are **not comfortable to go through**. But yet Paul tells us to **rejoice in our trials**, because he knows that it is not our human nature to understand that trials are a good thing for a Christian.

We consider a trial as a BAD thing, but James wants us to understand **God uses trials in our lives as a GOOD thing**.

He is calling on us to understand trials from God's perspective. We have to "cross the line" with our faith and say that even though this is not how I would normally think about trials **from my worldly view**, I must embrace the trials in the way that God says to think of them.

We must believe that God is completely **in control** of the trial. Everything that happens will **not** be good as **the world** considers good. God can take what **the world** wants to consider bad and turn it around to build our **patience**.

- It is going to be like an **exercise** for our faith.
- It is going to make us **more mature**.
- It is going to **strengthen our faith**.
- It will **conform** us to be **more like Christ**.

Three things God wants us to know about coping with hardships.

BODY:

1. Be Patient and Establish Hope in our Heart

James tells us that we will have many hardships in our life:

- We will encounter various trials (1:2).
- Our faith may be tested (1:3).
- The rich may oppress us (5:6).
- Our own brethren may complain against us (5:9).
- Our possessions and good health may be taken away (5:11).
- We may even face persecution (5:10).

LIFE IS HARD!

We need to know how to live day to day for God and how to cope with our

- Financial problems
- Health issues
- Bad relationships
- Oppressions
- Even, persecution.

James 5:7-9

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸ You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of

the Lord is near. ⁹ Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

So what is the “Hope” that we are have to “strengthen our hearts”? It is that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Christ conquered death and appeared to 100’s of people after his resurrection so they could witness His life after death.

Our source of hope is in our Lord Jesus Christ. James warned us in the first part of chapter 5 that we must not to put our hope in worldly things.

Verse 8 tells us to set in your heart the absolute fact that the Lord is coming again to receive us to Himself. He is our HOPE. He is OUR “precious fruit”. That is why we should be working for God and being patient. It is the act of “working towards an end”.

John 14:1-3

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

14 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

We must **NOT** focus on our problems in the here and now and try to resolve them on our own by whatever means is necessary. Especially, if it means using other people, cheating, and lying.

If your life is completely in shambles right now, James is **NOT** telling us to totally ignore the problem. We should make good and wise choices on how to deal with the illness, relationship, or problem and trust the Lord with it, and pray for His intervention. We know what those good and wise choices are by studying God’s Word and embedding the words in our heart.

We MUST know that living with Jesus for eternity is much more important than solving your current problem RIGHT NOW. When we begin our new life in heaven, we will have a new body that will not have problems and we will have it for an eternity. If we keep our focus on serving Christ, living for Him, and “strengthening our heart” with the hope of His return, it will keep you properly motivated.

Verse 9 shows what can happen if we lose focus. When we lose focus, we can let people (even fellow Christians) get in our way.

Our goal should be to be like Christ. By enduring trials, we are promised that we will be conformed to be like Christ. We will learn to love God and our fellow man. If anyone has mistreated us, we are promised that God will deal with the unrighteous, when the Lord returns.

Trust in the Lord, follow Him, be about His business, be patient, and He will bless you. **That is a promise!**

2. God Blesses Those Who Endure

James 5:10-11a

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁰ As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job

James uses the prophets as an example of men who suffered and endured (or showed patience). James is **NOT** saying to look at the prophets as an example of how to have “feel good” blessings and have problems go away.

Job was used as an example of how to be patient. God allowed Satan to test Job, he was not allowed to take his life. Job went through unimaginable and unexplainable suffering. He did talk about his misery and he cried out, but he did not blame God.

Job lost:

- his children
- his health
- his wealth
- his reputation
- his sense of God’s presence

Job lost everything, but he held on to God and his faith.

In the end, Job was blessed with twice as much as he had before.

- 14,000 sheep
- 6,000 camels
- 1,000 yoke of oxen
- 1,000 female donkeys
- 4 sons and three daughters
- He lived to an old age.

He was given much after the trials, but that is not the point of the story. **Nowhere in the scriptures**, is there a promise to God’s people, no matter how faithful, that **they will receive pleasure and ease now**.

Not every Christian’s life on earth ends in physical “blessings”. Consider the apostles. All of them were killed except for John.

Job teaches us to accept and trust God enough to take from His hand as He provides. **The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.**

Know that He is

- Good enough
- Wise enough
- And able enough

To give us what is good and best for us!

Job's story is similar to Paul's in II Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul suffered with a "thorn in the flesh". It was never taken from him.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

So what are the blessings that are promised here?

- God Permits Suffering to Humble Us
- God Permits Suffering to Draw Us Closer to Him
- God does not Always Remove Our Suffering, but He Gives Us the Ability to Endure Our Suffering

Our closest times with God are when we are in trials. When we are weak, we realize we need God.

3. God Has a Purpose in Our Life

James 5:11b

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

In our walk with the Lord, we often ask God to do things **FOR** us. But, God is wanting to do things **IN** us.

God is the Creator. Is He not?
God is Sovereign. Is He not?
God is the Potter. Is He not?
We are the clay. Are we not?

The song goes:

Have Thine own way Lord, Have Thine own way.
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me, after thy will.
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

We ask God to do things **FOR** us, He wants to do things **IN** us.
We may go through many trials, but God has a purpose and a plan for us.

If God were to choose between fixing your circumstance now or teaching you patience and how to trust in Him more, which would He choose? Which would be more beneficial to you for eternity?

You won't learn to be faithful, if God fixed all of your problems right now on your schedule. When we demand God to relieve us of our problem, it is like telling God, "I don't trust you to do it Your way in Your time". How foolish it is for us not trust His wisdom and love.

Maybe God has some other purpose for us to be suffering now. We need to look at things now with the lens that all will be set right in Christ later. We **praise Him and thank Him** for what He is providing for us **NOW!**

I can live with my infirmities now, because I know that something better is coming.

God is compassionate and merciful. If we did not understand the story of Job, we would have to throw the story out, because God does not appear to be compassionate and merciful.

If He wasn't compassionate and merciful, He would not have supplied a path for our salvation. We would have all died in sin.

CONCLUSION:

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT:

KNOW That:

- 1. You must Be Patient and Establish Hope in Your Heart.**
- 2. God Blesses Those Who Endure.**
- 3. God Has a Purpose in Your Life**

In the end, when we face God at judgment day, we can have full confidence that:

“Good things WILL only happen to good people”
“Bad things WILL only happen to bad people”.

This is what I can offer you today:

- An eternal presence with Jesus Christ
- Earned for us by the Work of Christ on the cross
- Delivered to us because we put our faith in His ability to deliver.

This is the offer that God has presented to us.

We live our lives by grasping onto that HOPE! The day that Christ will return to bring us unto His own!

If you have not put your faith and trust in Christ, DO IT TODAY!

Paul tells us that the goal for our life is contentment. We must be trusting God and learn to be content with what He provides for us. When we do this, we will grow in patience and become more like Christ.

James is telling us that **our life is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away**. Consider that our life on earth is very short compared to an **eternity** with God. 80 to 90 years on earth is nothing compared to eternity with God. We should be using our time here in earth to do the Lord's work.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, the window of opportunity is open for you now. God wants to come into your life. Won't you come forward this morning and let God know that you are ready to turn your life around for Him and start living your life for Him?

Your destiny is determined by how you live. Will it be for yourself or by serving God?

If you have wandered away from the Lord and the Holy Spirit is convicting you this morning to come back home, this invitation is open to you to rededicate your life to Christ by stepping forward.

We are also here with open arms, if you would like to identify yourself as part of this family of God in the Greenwood Christian church.

The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.