

Wait Training

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[0 : 00] James chapter 5, starting at verse 7, down through verse number 11. Jenny is going to serve us this morning. Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth.! Be patient about it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold, the judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

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

Father, again, we thank you for your kindness to give us your word.

Help us as we look at this particular portion of scripture. Father, would you please help me to be faithful to this text?

[1 : 03] Holy Spirit, would you bring conviction and clarity and comfort and encouragement? We ask that you would do amazing work in our hearts.

And would you, blessed Holy Spirit, please start that work in me, as I have this great privilege of serving your people and preaching this morning. We ask again all of this for your glory and our good.

In the name of our Savior, Jesus. Amen. If there is one virtue that we all admire, and yet none of us enjoy practicing, it's patience.

You feel that? It's patience. We want gains in the gym or losses on the scale without routine. We want vegetables in the garden without weeding and watering.

We want well-rounded kids without intentional parenting. We want career advancement without putting in the hours that it takes to advance our careers.

[2 : 13] Wouldn't it be nice if God just, poof, made us patient? But instead, God forms patience in us slowly.

By taking us, sometimes dragging us, kicking and screaming through seasons of trial. When circumstances frustrate us, and when persecution threatens us, and when injustice burns us, and when pain squeezes us, when hardship settles on our lives, like a weighted blanket, or a heavy North Dakota snow that maybe we'll get this week finally.

When hardship settles in on us, it is in these experiences that God forms patience in us.

Patience is learned by trusting God in suffering. You'll recall from last week that as James rebukes the arrogant and the abusive in chapter 4, 13, down through 5, 6, he stops calling his audience brothers and sisters.

We noticed that last week, didn't we? This familiar word, this familiar word that he has used repeatedly throughout the letter disappears when he confronts this pride and injustice that is oppressing the people of God.

[4 : 05] But in verse 7, did you notice? The word reappears. And it is like the sun on a chilly winter morning. With the light comes the heat.

As he turns his attention back to the believing community, his tone shifts from exposing pride to exhorting towards patience, from warning the oppressors to comforting the oppressed.

Look at verse 7. Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient.

Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. When we think about patience as it relates to farmers, we got to be careful here because farmers are not passive.

[5 : 21] Nobody in James' day had a hobby farm. Farming was hard work. Farmers have to select the field.

They have to prepare the field. They have to plant the seeds. They do everything within their power to produce the best harvest that they can.

But a farmer cannot schedule rain. And a farmer can't, you know, copy and paste a cloud from one section of his land to another section of his land.

Farmer can't make the harvest come more quickly. And so after doing everything that they can, farmers have to trust God. They have to be patient, waiting on God.

For what? To deliver the rain that will result in the harvest. James says, that's us.

[6 : 27] We should be like those farmers. Like those farmers who after doing everything that they can, trust God to provide the rain. Who have to commit themselves to being patient before God, knowing that there is nothing more that they can do.

Followers of Jesus, trust God until the coming of the Lord. What does James mean by coming of the Lord?

Well, let's start here. Who is the Lord that James is referring to? Throughout this section, this particular portion of his letter, Lord most naturally refers to God the Father.

He is the lawgiver. He is the judge. He is the Lord of hosts. Hosts. And so, although we might, in our time, immediately think of the Lord Jesus as the Lord, the coming of the Lord in James emphasizes God's intervention.

Bringing judgment on the lawbreakers and bringing deliverance for believers. So what about this word coming?

[7 : 55] The coming of the Lord. This is where, among other places that we have discussed together, this is where we need humility to learn and wisdom to discern and grace to disagree.

Because when we start talking about the end of the world, people can get a little stirred up, right? We can get a little opinionated. So humility to learn, wisdom to discern, and grace to disagree.

The Greek word underneath this word coming, *perusia*, it's translated coming in verse 7, but it carries a range of meanings in the New Testament.

And not only that, but the meaning seems to develop as we go through the New Testament. That's not helpful for us if we want to know, well, what does this word mean?

Well, the word is in development. Where does James fit into this word's unfolding definition? Well, James does not calm anxiety about the timing of the coming, like in 1 Thessalonians.

[9 : 08] He doesn't warn against cynicism, like in 2 Peter. Those who say, well, perhaps the Lord has forgotten his promise. It's probably broken.

He's not coming back. Things have continued, you'll recall, as they have always been. He's not confronting cynicism. He doesn't correct bad theology that there won't be a coming at all, like in 1 Corinthians.

Nor does he address the fear that somehow Christians have already missed the Lord's coming, like in 2 Thessalonians. James uses the coming of the Lord, I think, think, most like Jesus uses the word coming.

God will intervene. He will judge the disobedient. He will deliver the righteous.

And this coming is both certain and near. look at verse 8. You also be patient.

[10 : 24] Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Both certain and near.

It is at hand. In his gospel, chapter 11, verse 1, Mark uses this same word translated at hand.

There, it means that Jesus has arrived close to the city. He is near to the city, but he's not yet at the city. But he's still close enough that things need to be prepared for his coming.

At hand. At hand is like when you're driving back towards Fargo on the interstate. And the speed limit drops because you're getting close to the city limits.

You are not home yet. But it's time to start packing up the snacks and whatever stuff that you played with in the car. And it's time for all of the parents to begin saying we are almost home.

[11 : 29] Are we there yet? No, but we are almost home. this is James's point exactly. The coming of the Lord is close enough that it should shape how we live right now.

And so James says be patient and establish your hearts. Strengthen your inner resolve. Undergird your faith.

Brace your soul. why is this important? Why is it important that we be patient and establish our hearts?

Think about what we have learned in James so far. Pressure and persecution makes us restless. And the so-called wisdom of some leaders tells us to let our tongues run wild. To speak restless words.

[12 : 38] To react out of insecurity or anxiety. To stir up fear in others. To do whatever is necessary to escape the hardship or change our circumstances.

James interrupts that instinct. Verse nine. do not grumble against one another brothers and sisters so that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. Think of that moment when you are in your room and you are about to do something that you probably shouldn't do.

And then you hear footsteps outside the door. and so you stop what you are doing. You freeze for a moment.

You rethink your choices. Or maybe you are scrolling mindlessly at work. Or you are zoning out at the job site listening to the latest greatest biography that you're all about and someone comes and taps on your truck window or knocks on your office door and suddenly you come back to reality and you're like oh I was distracted there for a minute.

[14 : 10] That's James' picture. God is not far off. He is not distant. He is present. He is not unaware but fully mindful of your circumstances.

He is right there standing at the door. And that should impact how we live. God and so we don't follow the example of hot headed leaders that James has commented on.

Hot headed leaders who tempt us towards vice or violence. We don't seize justice on our own terms. We don't take matters into our own hands.

When life gets hard, we don't deal with our pain by turning against other believers. We don't retaliate against those who hurt us.

Instead, by God's grace and the Spirit's power, we resolve in our hearts to be patient. Why?

[15 : 22] Because the judge is at the door. And he is close enough to take care of you. James offers two examples of patience in suffering.

Verse 10. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, 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.

How the Lord is compassionate and merciful. First example of patience in suffering. We need patience like a prophet.

prophet. Interesting. Prophets were not always appreciated in the Old Testament. More often than not, they were ignored or resisted or mocked or murdered for what they were saying.

[16 : 36] Prophets didn't suffer then for doing wrong. Prophets suffered for doing right. they suffered as a result of speaking in the name of the Lord.

And still today, people who speak truth with conviction, they don't always get applause. But if we examine this word those grammatically, it may be that James is not only drawing a dotted line back up to the prophets, it may be that James is also encouraging, even inviting his first readers to look around the room.

To look around the room at those that they know who are remaining steadfast in suffering. Perhaps to let their minds wander for just a moment to the one who has been martyred for his faith.

Or to the one who has lost her business and her family because of her faith. James says, those among you and those that you have lost as a result of persecution like the prophets, those who remain steadfast in suffering, who persevere in doing what is right, though they pay dearly for it, they are blessed.

Jesus himself said, Matthew 5, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

[18 : 35] And so we need patience like a prophet, a willingness to suffer for obedience, a steady resolve to keep living by peaceable wisdom from above, a stubborn kind of commitment to the words and the gentle ways of Jesus, even when it's costly and lonely.

Second, we need patience like Job. Recall the opening words of this Old Testament book. Job is described as blameless and upright before God.

If there was ever someone in the Old Testament that you would expect to receive nothing but blessing from God, this is your guy.

He was healthy, he was wealthy, he was wise, he was truly living the best life now. He is surrounded by family, blessed in every possible way.

And then in a breathtaking series of events, God allows a character known as the Satan in the Old Testament to strip away everything that Job had, all of his blessings.

[20 : 01] Satan takes his wealth, Satan takes his health, his servants, his family. This is what I find both fascinating and encouraging about James choosing to use the man Job as an example of patience in suffering.

Job is not a perfect example. I find that both fascinating and encouraging. Job wrestles with what is happening to him.

He grieves certainly, but he also argues. Job gets emotional, angry even, and he cries out to God. He is desperate to understand, why is this happening to me, even though I have done nothing wrong to deserve it?

There seems to be no reason, no greater purpose for his suffering. And this messes Job up, doesn't it? And yet after losing everything, Job continues to trust God.

Fascinating little verse, chapter 13 and verse 15, Job says this, even if he kills me, I will hope in him.

[21 : 31] Even if it kills me, I will hope in him. And even if he's the one who takes my life, I will hope in him. Can you say that? That is a compelling example.

example. If faith in Jesus means the end of your life on earth, will you remain steadfast?

And if you will, then like Job, you will know something of the Lord's purpose. Oh, you may never fully understand why your suffering was necessary and why it had to be so hard and why it had to be so prolonged and why it had to be so painful and isolated.

You may never understand all of that. But your faith will be rewarded like Job's was.

With a deeper relationship with God. And you will know far better than if you had never suffered at all the compassion and the mercy of God.

[23 : 00] Patience is not a personality trait. It isn't earned like a paycheck. It isn't one like a lottery.

God does not poof give it to us all in one fell swoop. Patience is a spirit produced way of living that is learned in suffering.

It is learned as we respond to the truth about God revealed in this text. What do we learn about God? God? What is it that compels us to be patient and to remain steadfast in suffering?

What is the truth about God that could ever produce that kind of movement in our hearts, that kind of growth in our hearts? It is this.

He will act. He will act. He is the judge. He is near. He is compassionate and merciful.

[24 : 10] And so in light of who God is, we can ask, what does patient endurance look like?

You might ask this question, where do I feel pressure that tempts me to lash out? What?

For some of us, this is relational. There is a conflict. There is a misunderstanding that couldn't possibly get any worse.

There is a wound that you carry that no one understands. Perhaps for others, there is financial hardship or there is frustration at work there is a person in your life who holds power, some sway, some influence that you think you ought to have and yet your voice, your opinion, your ideas are ignored and overlooked and no one seems to care.

For students and children, maybe you feel like fighting back when someone pokes fun at you. maybe there is a teacher who doesn't treat you fairly or a friend who has stopped acting like a friend.

[25 : 53] It is through these trials of various kinds. The trials that James introduced us to way back in chapter 1 in verse 4, it is through these trials of various kinds, that we reach the telos, that we reach the purpose, the intention that God has for us.

What is that purpose? What is his intention? That we would be perfect, that we would be complete, that we would lack nothing.

In other words, that we would be fully formed, mature followers of Jesus, that we would be like him.

This is the end that God has in mind in our suffering here on earth.

Christ likeness. So when you are tempted to grab control, to manipulate circumstances, to lash out, to force an outcome, to take justice into your own hands, James says, listen, the judge is at the

door.

He's at the door. You don't have to control this. You don't have to send that angry text. You don't need to respond with a sharp comment.

[27 : 25] You don't need to give a cold shoulder or pull away relationally. Be like Jesus. Jesus. Be like Jesus even and especially when life feels hard and unfair and you suffer like a prophet for doing what's right.

Be like Jesus. Being like Jesus is costly. For some of us, the cost is forgiveness.

For some of us, the cost is broken relationships. for others, it may be telling the truth in love and that can feel like a heavy cost to have to carry.

Maybe for you, the cost is resisting the devil's temptation, a temptation that promises relief but only ever delivers regret. doing the right thing will often make life harder, not easier.

I wish I could tell you otherwise. Boy, that would be handy to tell you otherwise. But doing the right thing will often make life harder, not easier.

[28 : 42] Just look at Jesus. He only ever obeyed the Father and it cost him everything. His life.

For what? Because he obeyed? Because he did the right thing? Because he was gentle? Because he was good to the outcasts? What step of ordinary obedience can you take this week?

To align with God's wisdom, even if that obedience comes with a cost. Second, we can ask, what suffering in my life requires the steadfastness of Job?

What circumstances don't make any sense? What seems unfair? Where have you said, look, I just want to know.

I just want to understand why. I don't get it. This doesn't make any sense to me. Anybody said that in the last week and then had to be corrected by someone who loves you dearly?

[30 : 02] You're not going to understand this. perhaps you have unanswered prayers.

Maybe God seems more silent than present. Perhaps your tears flow freely at the thought of the things that you have lost along the way.

this passage invites you to say, I will trust you, Lord, even when I don't understand.

Even when I don't understand what you're doing, I will trust you when my emotions are raging. I will trust you when trusting you hurts.

A deeper, a more meaningful, more resilient, more life-changing, more world-impacting relationship with God flourishes in the soil of this kind of faith.

[31 : 31] faith. Maybe you don't consider yourself a Christian or maybe you are not sure. James's words have an invitation for you as well.

You have heard him say this morning, the Lord is near. He is near to deal with those who oppress you. yes, as the judge, but he also stands near with mercy.

Mercy that you desperately need. God sent his son, the Lord Jesus, to rescue and redeem sinners from their hopeless, helpless godlessness.

Jesus once prayed in John 17, this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

in other words, eternal life is not just about knowing that you will be in heaven for eternity. Eternal life is about knowing God now, knowing the Lord Jesus better, more fully, more richly, more deeply, now.

[32 : 56] Maybe the pressure or the hardship that you are experiencing is God's way of drawing you nearer to him. He is already drawing near to you.

Maybe the ache that you feel, the burden that you carry, the longing for something certain in your life, perhaps that is the Holy Spirit calling you out of self-reliance and into faith in Jesus.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. In James, we discover that steadfastness through suffering results in the delightful gift of becoming wiser with Jesus.

Jesus. And this wisdom continues to shape us week by week, day by day, moment by moment.

This wisdom from above shapes us in humble holiness and gentle reasonableness and merciful goodness.

And we are learning to make our faith visible. Visible in the words that we speak, the needs that we make, which leaders we choose to follow.

[34 : 22] And through our lives changed by the gospel, we are evidence of God's ongoing work of redemption in this world. We are the good fathers, our good father's first fruits, ongoing evidence that he is still at work in this world.

And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, may our faith not remain alone.
Lift your eyes up and off of your suffering and fix your eyes on Jesus. The Lord is near. He is standing by with compassion and mercy.
So be patient. patient.