

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Patient ‘Til He Comes James 5:7-9

As you remember, the theme of this epistle "Is tests of Living Faith." We have considered six of those tests.

The first test we examined was the "Response to Trials test" in James 1:2-18

The second test that we examined was the "Response to the Word test" in James 1:19-27.

The third test that we examined was the "Impartiality test" in James 2:1-13.

The fourth test that we examined was the "Works test" in James 2:14-26.

The fifth test that we examined was the "Speech test" in James 3:1-12.

The six test that we examined was the "Wisdom test" in James 3:13-18.

We are now considering the seventh test and we have called this test the "Friendship with the World test." This test began in James 4:1 and will extend through James 5:12. True genuine living faith is going to respond to the attitudes and actions of the world in a certain way and therefore can be used as a test of genuine or saving faith.

James 5:1-6 portrays the actions of the ungodly rich. We will now consider the proper response of those possessing genuine or living faith. Let us read VV. 7-9, **"Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, 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 at hand. (9) Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the judge is standing right at the door."**

This brief passage was written to people who were looking for the return of Christ. The author - James, the Lord's brother - had been with the apostolic band on the Mount of Olives at Christ's ascension. He had seen the *shekinah* glory, the luminous cloud of God's presence, overshadow the mount, and then watched his elder brother/Savior disappear into the clouds. Hardly had any time passed before the angels issued their challenge in **Acts 1:11** **"Men of Galilee,"** they said, **"Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."** Just as Jesus was caught up from the disciples in a cloud of glory they were told to expect his return in a similar cloud of glory.

They did not know when He was coming, whether it would be in their lifetime or not. But, they believed it would be soon. They lived in expectation of Christ's return. The New Testament contains over 300 references to Christ's return - one out of every thirteen verses!

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But it wasn't just Christ's promise that might cause the readers of this epistle to look upward; it was also the difficulties of life. The Jewish church in Jerusalem, because of the great persecution recorded for us in Acts 8, had become scattered and was experiencing various forms of persecution. **James 5:1-6**, as we discovered over the last two weeks, was a seething denunciation of oppressors who had reduced them to miserable poverty.

The world, when they undergo persecution, looks outward. When believers, who have the promise of Christ's return, are persecuted, they will look upward. They will be looking upward and saying, "Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus." This upward expectation will impact the way we live our lives.

Hopefully, as we consider several different exhortations that James gives his readers in light of Christ's return, we will enjoy a greater appreciation of the importance of this doctrine. **James 5:7-11**, in light of the coming of Christ, calls those who are being persecuted to respond in two different ways:

BE PATIENT

If we in fact believe that Jesus is coming again, it should lead us to respond to difficult circumstances in our lives with patience. If we in fact believe that Jesus is coming again, it should lead us to respond to even various injustices against us with patience. Let us read **VV. 7-8: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, 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 at hand."**

"Be patient" (MAKROTHUMESATE) literally means "long-tempered" as contrasted with "short-tempered." It does not call for a passive resignation to one's fate, but an attitude of self-restraint that enables one to refrain from hasty retaliation in the face of provocation. If you are in an unhappy marriage and you feel that you are suffering unjustly at the hands of your spouse, how should you respond? Should you be short-tempered and strike out against the perceived injustices? No, you should be patient, or in other words, long-tempered. This does not mean that you cannot actively work at improving your marriage; it means that you cannot seek to improve your marriage with a sledge hammer. The readers of this epistle, in just the same way, were not free to strike out in anger against the rich.

James calls his readers to be patient **"until the Lord's coming."** James, in a sense, is holding out before them the coming of Christ as the proverbial light at the end of tunnel. So, hopefully, as his readers keep this eminent event continually in the forefront of their minds, they will be able to endure patiently the abuses that are being heaped upon them until the coming of Christ and endure them patiently.

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The coming (PAROUSIA) of the Lord referred to in this passage is the event that theologians commonly call the “Rapture.” One day, at any moment, the Day of the Lord will arrive and God will begin to pour out His wrath upon the earth. But before this can happen, the church must be caught up out of this world and this event is called the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Cor. 15:51-53). Just as the readers of this epistle needed to continually focus on the imminent coming of Christ, we also need to do the very same thing. I do not know what abuses you might be suffering, but I do know this: Christ could return at any time. When he returns, any oppression or injustices that we might be experiencing will be terminated. Therefore, let us hang in and hang tough, not succumbing to the weaknesses of our flesh by striking out at those who might be making our lives difficult.

Aware of how hard it is to be patient, James undergirds his exhortation with an illustration, **“Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.”** The heaviest rains in Palestine fall between December and February. Before the heavy rains, are the “early” rains which come in late October and early November and are necessary for planting and seed germination . Then, after the heavy rains end in February, there is a brief break which is followed by lighter rains at the end of April and the first part of May which are called the “late” rains. These rains are important for the maturing of the harvest.

The early rain, the heavy rain and the late rain represent a process that is essential for a good harvest. All farmers must patiently submit to this process. To fight against it, to bite their nails, to insist they must have fruit in the middle of the process, is futile. We are also presently involved in a process that will result in a harvest at the Coming of Christ, and we must endure this process patiently.

Yes, Christ is coming and with His coming we will reap a harvest of blessing, but we must be patient. In submitting to God’s process, we will inevitably undergo stressful times, when it appears the rains will never come, but, these times can be spiritually beneficial to us as we call upon our faithful God. “The soul would have no rainbow if the eye had no tears.” So we wait confidently that the process that God has purposed will take place and that there will be a harvest of blessing at the coming of Christ.

So having given the illustration, it is not a surprise to us that James then, on the basis of this illustration, once again calls his readers to **“patience.”** Look at **V. 8, “You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”** How near is the coming of the Lord? The Lord’s coming **“is at hand.”**

His statement here leaves no doubt that James, like Paul, Peter, and John, looked at the personal return of Jesus Christ as imminent (Phil. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 John 2:18). Paul in **Phil. 4:5** said **“Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”** Peter in **1 Pet. 4:7** said, **“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”**

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John in **1 John 2:18** said, **“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.”**

The Lord would not only have us to believe but to watch; not only to love, but to watch; not only to obey, but to watch. To watch for what? Not for the wrath of God that is poured out during the Day of the Lord which includes the seven year period of tribulation described in such great detail in the Book of Revelation. But rather, we are to watch for the coming of Christ when the blessings of the harvest will be ours in Him. ARE WE WATCHING? AND ARE WE WATCHING PATIENTLY?

How should our belief in the imminent return of Christ effect our lives? Hopefully, we will be watching for Him patiently. But He is not only concerned that we are watching patiently, but also positively. The second exhortation that we find in this passage in light of the coming of Christ is in essence, BE POSITIVE.

BE POSITIVE

Let us look at **V. 9**, **“Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.”** It is one thing to get along with other believers when things are going well. It is quite another when we are all under stress.

Look at that very first phrase, **“Do not complain, brethren, against one another.....”** The word "complain" (STENAZETE) does not mean “murmur,” but “sigh” or “groan.” It therefore involves a feeling of criticism and faultfinding directed against others.

Trying circumstances can make people irritable. These irritations, these groanings can remain bottled up in our hearts or they can even spill over into our conversations. Apparently, this is what was taking place to a significant degree in the lives of his readers. The stresses that these Hebrew Christians were experiencing had begun to affect their relationships with other believers. Can this happen? Can the stresses we are experiencing in life spill over into complaints involving people who are near us? And the answer is, yes!

I recently shared with men in my growth group an incident that happened in my life that involved this very thing. Lynn and I like to walk whenever we get an opportunity. So one night not too long ago, I came home and it seemed to me like we had enough time to go for a walk. So, I suggested to Lynn that we might do this. The day had been stressful and I was tired. Lynn knew this and asked if I really wanted to go for a walk. I said, yes! So I got the leash to put on our dog named Bear and we started out on this walk. Bear was not cooperating and I was not enjoying my experience with the dog. Lynn was not a problem at all. I was enjoying her company but I was not enjoying the dog. Then a couple approached us from the opposite direction, also walking their dog. Bear began to strain at the leash and I began to get more irritated. I picked up my pace to get by this other dog, and by the time I had passed this couple I looked back and there was Lynn about 20 feet behind. So I waited, but I was still upset. Then she said, “Thanks for waiting.” and guess what I did? I snapped at her.

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Stresses in our lives can produce a groaning against people who are very close to us. Those feelings can be harbored in our hearts, or at a given moment in time, be expressed. But all these groanings, whether they are justified or not, must stop. What does James say? **“Do not complain (groan), brethren, against one another.”** Why?

“... that you yourselves may not be judged” Not only is complaining or groaning against one another sinful, it will result in the Lord’s censure at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not designed to execute the sentence of eternal damnation, but rather to determine what works in our lives as true believers are worthy of reward (2 Cor. 5:9). There will be no reward waiting for me in the way I handled the dog incident. I had an opportunity to excel but I failed.

I need to get sharper. Why? Look at the next phrase, **“Behold, the judge is standing right at the door.”** The judge is obviously the Lord Jesus, whose return again is viewed as imminent. James expects that this emphasis that he is giving to the immanency of Christ’s return should have an impact on our lives.

The key for us is to picture Christ **“standing right at the door.”** Literally, it reads “before the doors.” The plural “doors” apparently denotes the double doors at the entrance to the judgment hall. The realization of the nearness of the coming Judge should be both a comfort and a warning to them in their circumstances.

Lynn was just recently in North Carolina with our daughter Kristin. I knew that I would be picking her up from the airport on the 21st of August. I prepared for her return. I wanted her to feel welcome. I wanted her to feel as if I valued her return. We need to have the very same feeling as we anticipate the return of Christ. We need to even now be preparing for His return.

CONCLUSION

The people in the world, when they fall into difficult circumstances, quite naturally become impatient. They quite naturally become short-tempered. The people in the world, when they fall into difficult circumstances, will even begin to complain or groan against people who are very close to them, whether those people are deserving of their displeasure or not. Hopefully, in light of our hope. Hopefully in light of our belief that Christ is coming and that He is coming soon, hopefully, in light of our belief that Jesus is standing right at the door, we will, by the grace of God, choose to be long-tempered rather than short tempered. Hopefully, we will, by the grace of God, choose to be positive instead of complaining and groaning.