

Time to Wait

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[0 : 00] Okay, well let's press into the passage together now. I'll pray and then we'll get stuck in.! Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, thank you that you give us your life-giving word.

And we pray as we hear your word, you would teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us in righteousness so we might be able to live thoroughly in your world according to your good works you've prepared for us to walk in.

And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, how do you live in a world when the world around you seems like it's all wrong? I mean, the righteous seem to suffer and the unrighteous seem to prosper.

And how do you live in a world like that and not turn out to be a bitter and twisted and vengeful person? I mean, the corrupt businessman makes the big bucks and the righteous subcontractor loses his house.

Or the corrupt accountant makes millions and the righteous retiree loses their life savings. Or the corrupt scammer lives in luxury but the righteous labourer has their bank account emptied.

[1 : 13] Now, there's people in this room, me included, who have been cheated and defrauded by others at some time in their lives. And there are people in this room who have been really badly treated by others at some time in their life.

Or are still being treated really badly by others in their life. And if it hasn't happened to you yet, the chances are that it's likely to happen.

Unjust hardship will come upon us, will come upon you, one day in the days ahead. That's just breaking the good news to you, so you know. So how do you live in a world like that?

How do you live in a world like that? Having experiences like that and not turning into some vengeful, bitter, hard-hearted person. And the answer is, James gives us, having a steadfast hope that one day there will be a day of reckoning.

So what's going on is this. This world is moving towards an end. It's not just going around and around in useless circles. And God is taking this world to that end.

[2 : 30] And when the end comes, justice will be done. And the hope that we hang on to is that God will deal justly with injustice then.

And he'll deal with it rightly. The tables will one day be turned. And ultimately, the righteous will be rewarded. And the unjust, the unrighteous, will ultimately be judged guilty.

And held accountable. But right now, right now is the time to wait. Our passage today in James is all about trusting that God is in control while we wait.

He knows when we've been treated badly by others. And he will not let the guilty go unpunished. We just have to wait patiently until that day happens.

See, we're waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the parousia. That's the return. The passage in today is all about that day. The great and glorious day when the King returns in glory.

[3 : 34] And his people go out to him and then welcome him and gladly come back into the city. And everything is perfect. Everything is great.

But in the meantime, we have to wait. We have to be patient. See, while we wait there, have a look at chapter 5, verse 7.

While we wait, we need to be patient. You see in verse 7 to 8. It isn't advice. It's actually a command. Be patient. Patience involves waiting for something to happen.

Patient means being tranquil, calm while waiting. Not being anxious when you're waiting. It seems that the people that James is writing to have been treated badly.

And have been enduring hardship as God's people. See, it's tough sometimes to be a Christian. And these people have been exploited by godless rich people.

[4 : 32] See chapter 5, verse 4. We'll come back. We saw it last week. Chapter 5, verse 4. Behold, the wages of the labourers who have mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you.

And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. The unrighteous rich live in luxury, while the righteous poor are being exploited, being ripped off, being defrauded, being even murdered.

You see there, verse 6. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. The righteous poor are being exploited and are in no position to resist those who oppress them.

Now, it's not saying they're righteous because they are poor. They are actually righteous and poor. Right? Right? That's important to get a hold of. Now, I must admit that I am not patient at times. See, in an age of instant gratification, we really find patience hard. I mean, we are trained not to be patient.

[5 : 46] We've got the credit card. I'm sure you all have, otherwise you can't pay for your coffee. Right? But you've got the credit card, which has a limit on it. And you know what? I tried to reduce my limit the other day and they wouldn't let me.

Right? And you give a credit card to someone and then you can purchase anything you want instantly, right now. You can have it. And then Amazon will process it and they will post it out to you and package it to you faster than you can cancel the order.

Or you can actually have a pay now and buy now and pay later. If you want to, you can have it now and pay for it later. And someone gets rich because of that. Our photos are instant now.

You know? It used to be that the instant photo took you about two minutes to develop. But now the photo is instant and you can instantly put it on. Instagram. Right?

Delayed gratification is exactly the opposite. It used to be you take the photo, right? And about ten days later or so you'd get the film back and you could enjoy opening the packet with your friends and seeing the ones that didn't turn out.

[6 : 52] Now you push the button on your phone and it happens. When hardship comes, the temptation is to start doubting if God actually cares and not be patient.

When it seems that God is smiling on sinners and not on me, is God really there after all? Is it worth living for Him?

Does God know what's going on? And if He does, why doesn't He do something about it now? You know what it's like to be waiting for something.

You're expecting something to come. And the longer it takes, the more anxious you can become about it not turning up. I mean, I'm expecting a reply to an email I sent off last Friday and I've had no response to it yet.

What do I do? Do I send a text to say, have you got my email? Do I send another email to say, did you get my email? Well, what do I do? Or do I just wait a few more days? Our steadfast hope is the Lord Jesus Christ is coming.

[8 : 02] And then things will be sorted out. Then things will be sorted out. We just need to wait. See, look there, verse 7. 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.

The farmer can't make the fruit come any faster than it comes. He just can't. He waits for the rain, the early rain, the rain that comes in autumn.

And he waits for the later rain, the rain that comes in spring. And then, in God's timing, things will be sorted out. The precious fruit will come.

So don't give up hope. Be absolutely confident that the Lord Jesus Christ will come. He will come. And he tells us a second time in his passage again that he's coming.

[9 : 04] Have a look at that. He's at hand. Right? You also be patient. Verse 8. Establish your hearts. For the coming of the Lord is at hand.

It's really close now. It's closer today than it was yesterday. It's closer this month than it was last month. It's closer this year than it was last year. And on that day, everything will be set right. Everything will be perfect. The day of judgment will come. And the righteous will actually be rewarded. And the unrighteous, the rich who oppress you, will be dealt with.

And while we wait, verse 9, don't grumble. Grumbling is something that happens in the midst of things not going well for us.

I think Australians are good at grumbling. I'm pretty good at it. And when things are great, grumbling sort of doesn't increase.

[10:09] It tends to decrease a little bit. But when things are not great, that's when we tend to grumble. And grumbling about one another, right, is done amongst those who will give us a listening ear to the grumbling about one another.

Can you think of the classic example of grumbling in the Bible? Got to be thinking the Exodus, haven't you?

Got to be thinking the Exodus. The classic example is the nation of Jews. Just after they were saved from Egypt, they grumbled about the life in the wilderness.

They grumbled against Moses, their leader. God promised them food. But they complained and then they grumbled. They longed for their life where?

Back in captivity. Life was better before we were saved. They didn't want to be God's saved people anymore. They wanted to give up on God and go back to Egypt.

[11:17] And grumbling, right, is one step away from rejecting God. It's doubting that God is working out his good plans and purposes for the world in and through and even despite us and what's going on around about us.

It's faithlessness. It's not trusting God's word. He's promised in the midst of trials and difficulties. It's failing to see the big picture.

It's not recognising the good things that we've got. And God judged his people in the wilderness. They perished outside the promised land. They didn't make it in.

And see there in verse 9, the judge is at the door. Be patient. Don't grumble. He's there. Just about to enter.

Just about to come into the room. And then when you hear the command, all rise, everyone will rise. And when he walks into the courtroom, everyone will stand before him and receive what is due for what they have done while in the body.

[12:36] So, verse 10 and 11, remain steadfast. There's a precedent that patience is worth it. Take, for example, the prophets, verse 10.

As an example of suffering and patience, take, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. That is, the true prophets, yeah, not the false prophets, not the ones who suffered because of sinfulness, but those who spoke true words of God and suffered for it.

Hebrews chapter 11 reminds us of some of them. If you want to turn to Hebrews chapter 11, have a look at it. Hebrews chapter 11, pick it up at verse 32. You'll find Hebrews is just about two pages beforehand.

So, just go back in your Bibles two pages or three pages, you'll find it. Hebrews chapter 11, get up at verse 32 and have a look at it there with me. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 32.

And what more shall we say? For the time would fail to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, and Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreigners' armies to flight.

[13:57] Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword, they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.

Remember Elijah? Persecuted by Jezebel, we just read about her and those sort of things in 1 Kings over this year. David was treated terribly by Saul.

Jeremiah, remember, was stuck in a muddy, miry cistern so that he might actually die a terrible death, prophesying that the Babylonians would come and destroy Jerusalem.

He was a true prophet. Tradition holds it that Isaiah was sawn in two. Jesus entrusts himself to the Father who judges justly and he was crucified. It's these people who set the example for us of suffering patiently and we consider them blessed because they did.

[15 : 11] They didn't falter, they didn't give up on God, they stuck with him to the end because God is pleased with them. Jesus said that blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake in Matthew chapter 5.

We're going to look at Matthew next year. We consider them blessed who stood steadfast and suffered patiently. We're not to consider them as cursed.

The world will look on and see people suffering and go, huh, you sort of deserve that. But the righteous who suffer, we consider them blessed, not cursed.

or remember Job. And he goes on to the example Job's given. Someone who entrusts himself to God through unrighteous suffering. God is the one who was worth trusting even when Job was encouraged to reject him by his own wife.

Job is the example of someone who entrusts himself to God through unjust suffering. His faith was unwavering. And in the end, God blessed him materially in this world far beyond what he had that he'd lost.

[16 : 36] There's no promise that that's the case, but there is the promise that we'll be rewarded far, far greater than anything we can have in this world in the world to come. God is not a vindictive God who takes pleasure in the suffering of his righteous one.

He's very compassionate. Have a look at it there with me back in James chapter 5. Have a look at it there. Remember the righteousness of Job, the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

The word there, compassionate, is literally his bowels are greatly moved in anguish over the sufferings of his righteous ones.

He's torn in the guts over the suffering of his righteous ones. The ones of the six, the righteous people, are preyed upon by the unrighteous ones.

Our Heavenly Father, our mighty creator God, our wonderful and just loving God, is not like the evil gods of this world or the evil gods of the ancient world, like the Baals, the Dagon, the Marduks, the Mollicks, who delight in the destruction of people, demand child sacrifices amongst other things.

[18 : 16] The gods of the modern world and the modern West, I think it's consumption and materialism that sucks the life out of people trying to gain the whole world and yet forfeit their souls.

The true and living God is merciful and kind, wanting only good for his people, his precious children. And the temptation is to doubt God's goodness in the midst of suffering for being his precious children.

salvation. Well, it may be the case for you right now, but I'm sure it's the case for many believers around the world as well. Are you tempted to give up on God in the face of life being hard, in the face of unjust sufferings?

I know I have been. This word to us this morning is don't give up, be patient, wait for the Lord to return.

It won't be long, it won't be long. In the scheme of things it won't be that long. Establish your hearts, establish our hearts in the truth that the Lord is coming. Lay up this direction, this thinking in life.

[19 : 34] Blessing is coming, inexplicable joy is coming. I know it can be tough and I know it's tough for some in this room for all kinds of reasons, but hang in there with Jesus now.

Many others have already and we can look to them, the heroes of the faith and in due course, God willing, we might be the ones that the world looks to and goes, the Christians are going, wow, you guys did as well.

Which brings us into verse 12, doesn't it? I wonder if you thought along with others that this seems very, very strange, verse 12. But above all, my brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no so that you may not fall under condemnation.

I mean, it's interesting in the context of being patient, of not grumbling, of remembering the character of our God and his purpose is not to bless, not to curse, to remain steadfast through suffering and then he says, above all else.

Now, he's not talking about using four-letter words, right? He's talking about making oaths, about making promises.

[20 : 49] Now, why? Why on earth would he speak about that now in this passage? Surely, you could think about other things you could say above all else.

I mean, you think about it with me, you could say, above all else, love one another or above all else, be compassionate towards one another or above all else, pray for one another.

But, in the context of James, that keeps coming back to how we use our words, what we say and how damaging what we say can be and the implications of what we say can be, in the context of having no control over our future, in chapter 4, verse 14, of what we will do or what we won't do, we're told not to make oaths, to make promises about the future, what we will or won't do.

We're told to bridle our tongues in chapter 1, verse 26. That is, to direct our tongues what to say and what not to say. The great danger, here we go, the great danger of making oaths is to move towards blasphemy.

That's the danger of making oaths. Of speaking about God wrongly, right? So, above all, brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath.

[22 : 26] See, including God in our plans that don't include him, of making complicit with us possibly making lies and speaking half-truths, we're not to swear, we're not to make oaths because it's not a light thing to use the name of the Lord in vain, in empty cases, in cases that we've got real no control over or in cases where we're actually lying in reality, making ourselves God and in doing so planning for the future without him and literally, literally, it's saying here, fall under judgment.

Rejection by God. It's the same reason we're not to grumble against one another because this is blasphemy, in the end, is worse than grumbling.

Christians are those who speak the truth. Simply let our yes be yes and our no be no. What we say is what we mean.

Obviously, James had been listening to his big brother. It's what Jesus said back in Matthew 5, chapter 5, verse 33 of Matthew. Again, you've heard it said of those of old, you shall not swear falsely but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven for it's the throne of God or by the earth for it's his footstool or by Jerusalem for it's the city of the great king. And do not take an oath by your head for you cannot make one hair white or black.

[24 : 12] Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from the devil. from the evil one who is the father of lies.

Now, here's the thing about oaths, right? People only think it necessary to say oaths in a culture that's saturated by lies.

in a culture where lies are the norm. That's when people say that they make these oaths. And the more I have to promise that what I have to say is true, the less trustworthy my word really is.

The less trustworthy my word's become. And here's the thing. There are voluntary oaths and there are official oaths.

There's a difference between voluntary oaths and official oaths. What God is speaking against here are voluntary oaths, frivolous oaths, invoking the name of God or his creation or his footstool or any other kind of oath about God.

[25 : 24] and we're commanded not to make them. However, there is the place for official oaths where they are required to be made and these oaths go on the public record.

I mean, we've had last weekend Joel's back in town. He got married a couple of weekends ago and welcome back Joel. Where's your wife? I don't know. She's, who knows? She's around. Hope she's doing well.

Daryl and Bella are around. Where's Bella? I don't know. Okay, the wives are doing well this morning. But they've made official oaths, right?

They're required to be made and these oaths go on the public record. The wedding vows go on the public record. Like in the courtrooms go on the public record.

Or like in the ordinations of God's servants they go on the public record. Or like being appointed to a doctor or some other profession that the oath is sworn and goes on the public record.

[26 : 28] Places where it's possible to tell lies and the consequence of telling those lies are of massive significance for the welfare of others. We are asked to affirm the truthfulness of our word and so at the behest of others we do on the public record.

But in normal everyday life in our relationship with those around about us our word needs to be our bond. What I say is what I say. What I mean is what I mean.

Who I am is who I am. I speak the truth because I'm a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and when someone accuses me of lies that is a big, big problem.

the only currency I have as a gospel preacher is the truth and the only credence that Christians have as they preach and speak and live in the world is to speak the truth.

The hallmark of being one of God's people is speaking the truth. living in the last days we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ who stands at the door, who will judge the righteous and the unrighteous, who will condemn the guilty and the blasphemous but will save those who are waiting patiently for his coming, who have trusted in him as Lord and Saviour, who have received the wisdom from above, who have God's word implanted in them.

[28 : 15] The hallmark of being one of God's people is speaking the truth. Our yes is yes, our no is no. We speak the truth plainly and simply.

So now is the time to wait. Now is the time to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our waiting will be characterised by us, steadfast hope.

Trusting that he knows what he's doing, he knows what's going on. He's the one who is the judge of the just and the unjust, who is compassionate and merciful and despite what's going on around about us, we will be distinctively God's people by our life and by our lip.

Our steadfast life of hope, faithfully trusting God will set things right and our truthful speech will be without grumbling against others and will be trustworthy and true.

May this be the case. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, as we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, please help us to do that in such a way that brings you honour and glory.

[29 : 35] help us be those who trust you and your steadfastness and that we will stand steadfast in you until that day, despite what goes on about us.

And we do pray for our brothers and sisters around the world, even this morning, who are suffering for the name of Christ in inexplicable ways that we would never have experienced in our lives.

Help them to remain faithful and true to you. And we pray that those who oppress them, that you might bring them to repentance and faith, that they might not receive the just judgment coming, but might be spared and receive your mercy as we have.

Think that you are a compassionate and merciful God. Please help us to be compassionate and merciful people, and please help us to be those who are characterised by a lack of grumbling and by truthful speech.

we pray in Jesus name. Amen.