

The Christian Life: Patience and Perseverance

Sermon 18 in the James Series

If there are two words that we could use to describe how we are to practically live our Christian life – these two would sum it up well. And James brings that before us in:

James 5:7-11

We made the point last week that this paragraph could be

- I. Be Patient in the Light of the Coming of the Lord 7-9
- II. Biblical Examples of Patience 10-11
- III. Persevere, Remembering God’s Compassion and Mercy – 11

Last week we dealt with the 3 eschatological phrases in these verses.

- The Lord is coming
- The coming of the Lord is at hand (literally “near”)
- The Judge is standing at the door.

This week we focus on the two main words and the Biblical examples.

I. The Theme of Verses 7-11 -- Patience and Perseverance

Two related words stand out in this passage

A. PATIENCE – used 4 times in verses 7-10

Twice – James uses it as an imperative – a command.

- v. 7 – Be Patient
- v. 8 – Be Patient

We know the Christian life requires PATIENCE.

The Lord is gracious – but often troubles abound while sinner appear to prosper.

There are times when it seems that doing the wrong thing, cutting corners, cheating a bit, lying a little would bring better results – and that following God leads to trouble – but we need patience.

Bunyan illustrated this in Pilgrims Progress as Christian saw two young children – Passion and Patience.

Passion wanted all his good things NOW – but Bunyan says Patience was willing to wait.

Passion opened all his toys with haste – but soon they were broken and he was left with nothing – while Patience still had good things waiting for her.

Of course, it symbolizes the lost man who lives only for TODAY and THIS LIFE – while we – as Christians – wait for a better day.

Hebrews 11:13-16

We live in a better day than those OT saints did because we have the full revelation of the gospel. They needed patience for the coming of Christ --

Yet there is STILL a more glorious day coming. We need patience for the coming of the Lord when we shall fully receive that inheritance.

Today we live as strangers and pilgrims.
Tomorrow, we will live with our Lord – forever!

There is another reason James exhorts his readers to patience. We find it in the context.

They are being oppressed.
They are the off-scouring of society.
They are being taken advantage of – and they have no earthly recourse of justice.

Be patient during times of suffering. It's only temporary.

Rev. 6:9-11

Here John shows – in a vision – a shocking sight.
The saints of God are looking for the day of vengeance!
God tells them to WAIT just a little bit longer.
Have patience.
The day of recompense will come.

Understand – this is ONLY a vision.

-- The martyrs are not locked away somewhere awaiting the last day.
-- This operates much like when God said Abel's blood cried to him from the ground.

READ

B. PERSEVERANCE (endure or steadfast) -- HUPOMONE

It's a different word than patient -- but the meaning is very close.

The word **HUPOMONE** is used twice (once as endure and once as perseverance in the NKJV) or as steadfast and steadfastness in the ESV – both in verse 11.

“Cheerful or hopeful endurance. (Strong's)

“To continue to bear up despite difficulty and suffering” – Louw and Nida

“Patient continuance in waiting.” (Strong's)

I hope I do not have to convince you how important perseverance is.

One of the Five points of Calvinism is perseverance of the saints.

By the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit, every true believer WILL endure to the end and finish his race.

**The weakness of our flesh cannot prevail against the power of God.”
Robert Godfrey quoting from the canons of Dort. Sanctification.**

The Christian life IS a race.

Hebrews 12:1-4

I used to love to run distance in my younger days.

I never could do it long – because I have bad feet – but to this day I occasionally dream I am running a marathon.

Then I wake up exhausted ☺

Anyway -- one time a few years ago I was driving over to Trinity RBC to preach at a men's gathering.

What I saw has stuck with me because of my experience running.

On the way to La Mirada – there are a couple of big hills.

There was this lady – running – you could tell she was a good runner and an experienced runner.

But she was STRUGGLING up the hill.

Her form had broken down – her arms were flailing.

She was doing the best she could – but she was losing ground.

If things didn't get better soon – she was going to stop.

Now – in running – there is this phenomena – Your Second Wind.

It's a great thing when it happens.

Your struggling just about ready to give up – then suddenly – you get a burst of energy and strength. YOU CAN GO ON. You do not quit. You get your form back and you run smoothly and feel like you could run forever.

The Christian life is sometimes like that.

We struggle – we are meant to be strugglers.

We struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

BUT WE PERSEVERE BY GOD'S GRACE.

He's never left us – even if at times it might feel that way.

All the good we have done or could do is because of Him.

We will endure to the end – by the grace of God – we will finish the race.

The Christian life isn't a SPRINT.

The Christian life is an ENDURANCE race – until the end of our God appointed days.

Last week I gave a solemn warning to the lost.

You never really know how much time you have on this earth.

This is true for Christian and Non-Christian.

Who could have guessed last Sunday, that by this Sunday –
Jessica from Mountain Reformed -- a middle aged woman – in
relative good health – would have gone to be with the Lord.

She got the flu.

It turned into pneumonia.

The doctors did all they could – but she died.

-- Things can happen so quickly.

-- Things can happen so unexpectedly.

For the lost – that should be a terrifying thought.

For the Christian – you have endured – you have
finished your race – you have won the prize!

II. Examples of Patience and Perseverance

A. The Farmer – v. 7

The early and latter rains here are literal.

The farmer needs water for his crops.

In the region where James lived – the early rains came in **Nov.-Dec.**
And the latter rains came in **March-April.**

Both were necessary for healthy crops.

We are inconvenienced by a draught.

In Southern California we are currently going through what could be the
driest January on record – ZERO rain.

In James day – a draught could be DEADLY.

Many farmers worked small plots of land.

They lived and died with this land.

A draught that caused the destruction of the crops – could well mean their death – as they would have NO CROPS – NO FOOD – and NO MONEY for food.

He waits patiently for the crops to come to full fruition.
He may be hungry – supplies may be running low.
He has to wait until the time of harvest – he can't pick the crops too soon – or they won't be full grown and there won't be enough.

He waits – he is patient – because there is nothing else he can do.

WE WAIT on the LORD.
WE are PATIENT because we can trust in Him.
THERE IS NO OTHER PLACE for us to go.

B. The Prophets --

The Primary use of the Old Testament – points to Christ.
There is a secondary use – and we see it right here in James.
Their EXAMPLE.

1 Cor. 10:1-5

We see the spiritual and typological use of the OT

1 Cor. 10:6-12

Here is the practical application

-- “These things were written for OUR EXAMPLE.”
-- And again – eschatology – “upon whom the end of the ages has come.”

We won't turn there, but in Hebrews 11 we see example after example of those who have gone before us – who trusted in the Lord.

The prophets are an example of suffering and patience (v. 10) as they continued to faithfully wait upon the Lord and serve the Lord even in the face of great opposition.

The NT martyrs give us that same example.

v. 11a -- We count them blessed who remain steadfast

Transitional verse – takes us from the prophets to Job.

It also takes us back to **1:12**

In the midst of TRIALS we are to remain steadfast.

We are to persevere as the prophets and Job.

Read 1:12

This takes us right back to **1:2**.

“**Blessed**” is the Greek word MAKARIOS – occasionally translated HAPPY – but generally translated BLESSED.

We can see how James ties so many of his themes together throughout his epistle.

C. Job

-- James uses Job as an example of perseverance – although there is a strong relation between patience and perseverance.

You cannot persevere without patience.

Job 1:20-22

Now the book goes on for 41 more chapters.

Things didn't get better for Job right away – in fact – they got worse.

But Job is an example of PERSEVERANCE.

Job is also an example of RIGHTEOUSNESS

Turn to Ezekiel 14

An interesting passage in the midst of an often forgotten book.

Ezekiel

Was a prophet in exile.

-- He was carried away with the first wave of the Babylonian captivity
-- he was probably about 26 years old.
-- he began his prophetic ministry at age 30

-- the favorite designation for Ezekiel is SON OF MAN.

-- He suffered the loss of his wife – who died – as prophesied by the Lord -- right before the final siege of Jerusalem as a sign of the total devastation that was coming – Ezekiel 24

-- His ministry seems to have ended when he was 50 – but we do not know anything about his death.

READ 14:12-16

Three heroes of the faith.

Noah – who delivered only his own family while THE ENTIRE WORLD was destroyed.

Daniel – and this is probably not the Daniel we know – who was a contemporary of Ezekiel – but an ancient Daniel alluded to in **Ezekiel 28:3** – and was known for wisdom and righteousness.

Job – who lost his entire family except for his wife.

These 3 were ancient men.

These 3 were known for their steadfastness.

These 3 – interestingly enough – were not Jews – as they preceded Abraham.

James chooses Job – assuming his readers would know the account as an example of patience and endurance.

III. The Lord is Compassionate and Merciful – 11b

We can see the end purpose in the life of Job.

We have read the end of the book.

Job didn't know the purpose of God as he went through his trials.

Job couldn't understand WHY he was going through his trials.

We don't know the reasons why we go through our difficulties either -- except to generally know this:

- God loves His people
- All things happen for good
- There is a purpose for all things – even if we never find in this life what it was.

AND – God is compassionate and merciful.
He is not an ogre or a tyrant.

He is called OUR FATHER – and He is perfect in every way – like no earthly father could ever be.

Is He YOUR Father?

He's your Creator – whether you like it or not.
He is Sovereign over you – whether you believe it or not.

All true children of God come to Him by faith and repentance.

ALL THE LOST – refuse to come – or they try to come some other way than through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It is true it takes humility to come to Christ.
You must admit that there is NOTHING you can do.
You are powerless.
But God is infinitely POWERFUL.

Trust in Him – and your soul is safe – for all eternity.

PRAY

Hymn 579

Benediction: 5:11