

Patient Until Jesus Comes (James 5:7-12)

By David Feddes

We're continuing to learn from the book of James. James is a book written in a situation where there are a lot of problems—discrimination in the church, confusion about right and wrong, confusion about the relationship between faith and what you ought to be doing. There are also problems in society, where rich people are using their power and wealth to push other people around. A lot of people are thinking, “Hey, I can do whatever I want. I make my plans. I’m a big businessman. I call the shots.”

James writes to that kind of situation. When you live in a situation where society as a whole has big problems, and where the church seems to be teetering and has more than its share of problems, what do you do?

James has just finished writing about the problem of business as usual, where people say, “I control the future. I know what’s going to happen. I plan it. I make it happen. I care about me. I trust my wealth. I love luxury. I use others.” James announces God’s woes on those who are wealthy and who are mistreating others. As James puts it, they are “fattening yourselves for the day of slaughter” and “hoarding wealth in the last days.”

So what do you do in that kind of situation, where so many act as though God doesn’t matter, as though we’re not in the last days, as though we’ll never answer to God? James says you have to live in light of the fact that Jesus is coming again. He’s coming again—that is the dominant reality. All this other stuff you look at sometimes, that you worry about, that you think is big stuff and you don’t see how it could possibly change—I guarantee you, it’s going to change. It’s going to change in a huge, almost unimaginable way. And if you want to deal with the reality, all this other stuff is small potatoes. The big thing is the return of Jesus Christ and the eternal kingdom that’s going to come to earth when he comes again. So you need to live in a certain way in light of the fact that the Lord is coming.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.

⁹ Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned. (James 5:7-12)

Jesus will return

Jesus is going to return, and in light of that fact we are called to be patient and to stand firm. James says again and again, “The Lord is coming. The Lord’s coming is near. The Judge is standing at the door.” Even when you’re swearing, keep in mind that you’re going to be condemned for swearing if you keep it up. And so again and again and again he points to this fact—that Jesus is coming.

If I had to point out maybe the most neglected thing in the thought of most Christian people, it is simply living in that awareness. Sometimes Christians think about the fact that Jesus did some things in the past—some mighty miracles. He died in the past to take away our sins so that we can be relieved of the guilt and the punishment of those sins. But we really don’t think as much about the thing that the Bible emphasizes hugely—that he is returning. And because he’s returning, we live in the last days.

His first coming was God himself coming to earth and living among us. The events of his death and his resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit change everything. They move us into the last days. They move us into the period of God’s new covenant with humanity. We live in a very different situation, and that culminates when he returns.

When he comes again, those who love him will rush up to meet him because his face will be the sight they have desired more than anything else. Closeness to him will be what we have always longed for. But when he appears, the Bible says that those who were not prepared for his appearing will flee. They will cry for the rocks to fall on them and for the mountains and hills to cover them and hide them from the face of the Lamb and from his wrath (Revelation 6:16).

That is where the whole world is headed—toward that great reckoning, where it will either be the greatest joy of your heart or the greatest of all terrors. Therefore, the most important thing in the world is to be prepared for that coming, and to know how to handle life in the meantime.

We need to know that all of the proposals people have for making the world a perfect place are not going to happen until he comes again. You can be very impatient, wanting heaven on earth, and become very eager to do almost anything to get rid of what’s wrong with the world. Again and again throughout history, people in their efforts to get rid of what’s wrong with the world have often made the world a worse place. Because in their efforts to get the perfect, they think, “Well, if only we wipe out a few people here—or maybe a few million there—then it will become a worker’s paradise. Then it will become fabulous. Then it will be all we want it to be.”

Utopianism—the aim for a perfect world—ironically has killed more people than almost any other ideology because they can’t be patient. They can’t count on the Lord to do it. They’ve got to make it happen, and in order to make an omelet, you’ve got to break a few eggs. That’s what you get when you live aiming for heaven on earth but trying to bring it about now. That was Marxism—a Christian heresy. Marxism is the notion that you can create heaven on earth by dispensing with Jesus Christ and using your own revolutionary methods to get it done.

When James calls us to be patient until that great day when Jesus makes everything new, he gives three models of patience: a farmer, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord, and the Old Testament figure Job.

Faith and farming

The Bible talks a lot about farming. Jesus talked a lot about farming. I grew up on a farm, so that gave me a little extra boost beyond the commentaries, because you can tell—even some of the commentary writers don't know diddly about farming. They sat in some college or seminary their whole lives and don't know much about farming. But anyway, sorry about that.

The Bible talks a lot about farming, and James is no different. He says, “Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (James 1:21). He says that you can't have a plant of one kind producing fruit of a totally different kind. “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18). Jesus himself told those stories about a farmer going out to plant his seed. He talked about seed growing secretly in the ground, and a couple of his parables really do speak to this issue of being patient like a farmer.

He says in one of his parables that the kingdom of God is like a seed that somebody plants, and then he goes and eats and sleeps and does whatever—and the seed grows, he knows not how (Mark 4:26–27). You can't make that seed grow. It just grows in its own time. You can do certain things to plant it, you can do certain things to care for your crop, but you can't make it grow.

Jesus also tells a parable about impatience when he talks about a farmer who plants his field with seed, and then an enemy comes along and throws a bunch of weed seed on the field. When the weeds come up, the workers say, “Something happened here. What are all those weeds doing out there? Should we rip them out right now?” And the farmer says, “No, just let them grow. At harvest time we'll sort out the good grain from the weeds.”

Jesus is saying you've got to be patient, because the Son of Man is coming again with his angels, and there's going to be that great sorting—but it's not harvest time yet. Until harvest time, you need to have a measure of patience.

“See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop,” says James, “and how patient he is for the autumn and the spring rains,” or more literally, the early and the latter rains (James 5:7). For those farmers in Palestine, they really needed the rains to come at the right time. They didn't have big irrigation systems like we have now; they needed the rains, and they needed the right timing for those rains—and they couldn't make it rain. Shortly after you planted, you really did want enough rain to make sure everything germinated and got off to a good start. Then when the heads were starting to fill out, you really wanted those latter rains. Rain at any time is nice, but the timing of the early rain and the latter rain was especially important. When the heads are filling out, you want to have a good rain just before then.

Farmers planned accordingly, and maybe that's one reason why farmers are less likely to be atheists than university professors. University professors get paid by the government, and things

are kind of controlled and predictable. But when you're a farmer—if the rain doesn't come—you're literally toast. Farmers are always relying on what is beyond their power for something to happen. The farmer has to wait for the land. When you wait and the rains come, then comes the harvest time. At harvest time you get the grain, the corn, whatever it was that you planted.

But in the meantime, you couldn't dig it up every five minutes after you planted it to make it come up. When it was growing, you couldn't say, "Well, I've got to go out there and give it a nudge." It just grows—or it doesn't. One of the things you have to do is let it grow, because it has its own timing.

So it is with the coming of Jesus Christ. God has his own timing. His timing is not measurable the way ours is. "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8). God's timing is not a matter of watching your watch as much as it is the events that matter to God. The first coming of Christ means that the second is ripe and could happen whenever God decides it will happen.

He also looks at the ripeness of humanity. Are the righteous ripe for harvest? Are the wicked ripe for destruction? Sometimes God has decided it's not yet time to bring it all to an end and bring the curtain down. But we can be sure that if we are living for the Lord, planting faithfully, we can count on a harvest of righteousness.

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Be patient. Stand firm. Those are not the favorite virtues of most of us. We are in a hurry. We want it all now. When there's something wrong, we want it fixed now. We want it fixed totally. The total fix is coming, but in the meantime, be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Wait patiently for the Lord's coming.

Patient perseverance

- Declare truth amid confusion
- Stand firm under attack
- Seek revival of wavering church
- Expect troubles and keep rejoicing
- Await God's timing. Earth will be perfect only after Jesus returns.

When you live in a time that is very confused, when people don't know whether they're coming or going—and make no mistake, we live in one of the most confused times in the history of the world—there has never been a time that I know of in human history when people would simply declare themselves to be male instead of female. You couldn't even imagine it because it was so obviously false. But with enough chemicals and enough slicing, you can literally attempt to be what you aren't.

There have very rarely been times in the history of the world when people said you could take away all law enforcement and live in paradise. Whatever is wrong with law enforcement, one thing everybody always knew for sure was that if you leave it to the crooks, thugs, and murderers, society is not going to blossom and flourish into a fabulous place.

And of course, the deepest confusion is simply that we do not need God, that God is a nonfactor. Again, in the history of the world, almost all peoples had this religion or that religion. In our time, there are more and more of the so-called “nones”—and I don’t mean nuns in habits, but n-o-n-e-s—those who believe in nothing and have to invent themselves, invent morality, invent everything on the go.

In a time like that, you don’t have to go around whining or ripping into everybody. What you do is keep on speaking the truth and believing the truth in a very confusing world, while being compassionate toward those who have lost hold of it and need again to understand what truth is.

In a world like that, count on being attacked. Figure on it. Many of you sitting here—especially those in your teens or twenties—are in a degenerating society. You might as well know that. That’s not talking like an old codger. You are in a degenerating society that has lost track of its roots. If you hold fast to the Christian faith, you’re going to face fiercer opposition than you once did. It used to be respectable to be a Christian, respectable to believe in traditional morality that many cultures throughout the world had held. Now it is considered immoral to hold on to those same moral beliefs. Things have been flipped, where good is evil and evil is good.

You need to be ready for that. You need to be ready for people to oppose you and, in the name of tolerance, to fire you. If you say one thing they don’t like, they will try to get you fired and declare themselves the most tolerant people in the history of the world.

You live in a time when the church is more and more confused. It’s been going on for maybe a hundred or a hundred fifty years now, when the church lost its confidence in the Bible, when the church decided that its more recent scholarship knew better than what the Bible says and what the ancient creeds said. Many churches have been reinventing themselves. What do you do? You persevere. You keep going. You stay patient. You stand firm.

Expect troubles, and don’t go around whining. Keep rejoicing. James says, “Rejoice when you face trials of various kinds” (James 1:2). Expect the troubles, and expect to go on rejoicing in the Lord because you know he’s coming again. Then await God’s timing. Earth is going to be perfect when Jesus returns—and not until then. In the meantime, keep praying, “Your kingdom come, your will be done” (Matthew 6:10). Keep making a difference where you can make a difference, and don’t get discouraged when you’re not able to change the whole world in the next five minutes. Make a difference where you can make a difference.

Patient with others

Be patient. Wait for the Lord’s coming, and be patient with each other. “Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door” (James 5:9).

It's very easy to be grumpy when times are hard. When you've had a bad day at work, the dog had better look out or he might get a boot in the ribs when you get home—just because he was there and you were grumpy. You can do the same thing around people. When you're under pressure, you're often harder to get along with and have a very irritable attitude toward those around you. So when James writes about being patient and dealing with high-pressure situations, he reminds believers not to grumble against each other. You're going to be tempted to grumble whenever the pressure is greater and life is harder. Grumbling against other people, blaming them for anything that's going wrong—even when they had nothing to do with it—is always going to be a temptation.

James says you don't really want to go there. If you want to judge others and grumble against them, keep in mind that the Judge is coming. If he wants to grumble about you, it won't be hard for him. He knows your whole life. He knows you very well. If he wants to bring up all that is irritating about you, that would not be where you want to be. He's standing at the door. So don't judge others unless you want to be judged the same way you're judging them.

Earlier, James says, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom" (James 2:12). He also says, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12). So he's saying again what he's already said a few times: be careful about attacking others. During times of trial, there will be people in your life who aren't to blame for the trials you're facing, but they happen to be in the vicinity. Isn't that how it often goes? The people you grumble at are those who happen to be in the room while you're in a bad mood or who happen to be around. Even though others may be the real cause of your troubles, they're the ones who feel the brunt of it. So be patient not just with the situation, but with the people around you, especially your fellow believers.

A farmer is a model of patience. Another model is the prophets.

Persevering prophets

"Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered" (James 5:10–11). Jesus said something very similar: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11–12).

So if people are picking on you for following Jesus, you're in great company. That's what they did to the prophets, and the prophets were blessed. As happens so often, James is echoing his older half-brother. We consider blessed those prophets who persevered. When we find ourselves in their company, we can learn from their endurance.

The Old Testament is full of stories of the prophets. Let's take the story of Elijah for a moment, since James mentions him later in this chapter. Elijah lived during the time of Ahab and Jezebel. The Bible says there was never a king like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil, egged on by his

wife Jezebel (1 Kings 21:25). They were bad for each other and bad for everyone else—a terrible pair. They were steeped in idolatry, murder, wickedness, and cruelty. Prophets like Elijah and many others were hounded, hunted, and hated. Many fled, and some were killed. Those who weren't killed were usually the ones who managed to hide in caves or remote places.

Elijah was one of those. He hid by the brook, and after a while, when the brook dried up, he had to go elsewhere. He always had to stay out of Ahab and Jezebel's path, except for the moments when God said, "Go talk to them." Elijah would talk to them, then flee again. Even when he had great victories—like the showdown on Mount Carmel where he triumphed over the prophets of Baal—Ahab and Jezebel didn't repent. The very next day, Jezebel issued an edict that Elijah had to be killed. That was her response when God sent fire from heaven to prove his reality. She doubled down on rebellion.

So Elijah fled once again, going to the mountain of God. There, he said, "I'm the only one left. There's nobody else who serves you anymore." He was so depressed and despairing that he wanted to die. Then came a great earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. A great wind and storm came, but the Lord was not in the storm. Then there was a still small voice—a gentle whisper—and Elijah knew that the whisper of God was more powerful than all the rage of Ahab and Jezebel.

He humbled himself before the whispering God, and God said, "You think you're alone, but there are seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal or kissed his image. I've got work for you—so get going. Anoint Elisha as prophet, anoint the next king of Israel. I'm still running the show. You just keep going, Elijah."

That prophet, who faced so many hard times, would still face more. A new king sent a captain with fifty men to arrest Elijah. Elijah said, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you." And they were consumed. Another captain and fifty men came, and they weren't quick learners. They demanded that Elijah come with them, and again he called down fire from heaven, and they too were consumed.

Then a third captain with his fifty men came, but this one begged Elijah to come with him instead of ordering or threatening him. Elijah went with him and told the king, "You called on Baal instead of God; you're going to die." And the king died of his injuries.

So Elijah faced moments when he was hunted and opposed by enormous forces, but also moments when the power of God was poured out against his enemies. Finally, there was that moment when Elijah was taken up into heaven in the presence of his successor Elisha. The chariots and horses of fire came to take him away. God's enemies had been consumed by fire from heaven, and Elijah was carried into God's presence by that same heavenly fire—taken up without ever dying.

Then in the New Testament, when Jesus' glory is revealed on the holy mountain at his transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are there speaking with him. You see what it's like to be a prophet. You're hunted and hated, and all kinds of things go wrong, but God's power reaches out on behalf of his prophets, and God's love saves them and brings them to glory. Elijah, in a sense,

was the paradigm prophet—the one who pictured what would happen to all God’s prophets: they would face terrible things and yet be blessed. “We consider blessed those who have persevered” (James 5:11).

Other prophets suffered too. Jeremiah dealt with wicked kings and was thrown into a cistern—a deep pit with mud at the bottom—and left there to die. Only when an African servant came along and rescued him was he saved. But in the end, Jeremiah was still alive, and the wicked kings were dead.

Then there was the last of the prophets who prepared the way for Jesus: John the Baptist. He was thrown into prison for speaking truth to power—for telling a king he couldn’t steal his brother’s wife. The vengeful wife had his head chopped off and delivered on a platter. That’s what became of the last prophet before Jesus.

So when Jesus spoke of the blessing of the prophets, he didn’t mean it would be easy. But ask yourself—whose shoes would you rather be in? The shoes of Herod and Herodias, or of John the Baptist? Everyone dies. John died and was received into glory. The wicked died and had to answer for their murders.

“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered” (James 5:10–11). You need to read about those prophets. Don’t let your Bible lie shut. When you live in tough times, you’ll be fortified by knowing about the great men and women of God who went before you. You’ll remember someone like Isaiah, who spoke the Word of God through good times and hard times, who was the prophet for a godly king during invasion and kept up the courage of the people—and when the next king came along, a murderer, according to tradition Isaiah was sawed in two.

You need to know these stories—the heroes and martyrs throughout history who lived with the Lord, paid a high price, but received a great reward. Surrounded by evil and suffering, attacked cruelly, the prophets kept preaching. You need to get some steel in your bones, a spine, and a voice to live in times like this.

James says, “We consider blessed those who persevered.” He’s returning to how he started his letter: “Brothers, consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2–4). “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

So persevere. There’s a crown waiting. That’s why you can be patient—because Jesus is coming again. He’s wearing a crown, but he’s also carrying a crown for everyone who is faithful to him.

James speaks of the farmer, he speaks of the prophets who were faithful and blessed, and he speaks of Job.

Job's perseverance

"You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11).

Now I'll assume some of you have heard of Job's perseverance—but maybe not all. So let's review. Job was the greatest man of his time, a righteous man but also very prosperous and successful. He had camels, oxen, donkeys, and sheep by the thousands. He had many workers, a large family of seven sons and three daughters, and he served God. He was deeply concerned about his children, and even if he thought they might have sinned, he would worship, pray, and offer sacrifices on their behalf, interceding for them before God. That's the kind of man he was.

Satan noticed. During a meeting of God and the angels, Satan appeared, and God asked, "Have you considered my servant Job? There's no one like him. He fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8).

Satan replied, "Yeah, well, who wouldn't? It pays! You've put a hedge of protection around him and made everything prosper. He's got a beautiful family and all this wealth. If that's the pay for serving God, who wouldn't? People like you, God, if you bribe them enough." Satan was a prosperity theologian.

So God said, "Okay, Satan. You may take away what he has, and we'll see how he responds."

Then disaster struck. A servant rushed up to Job and said, "The Sabeans attacked and took all the oxen and donkeys and killed the servants. I'm the only one who escaped." Another came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the shepherds. I'm the only one who escaped." Another reported, "The Chaldeans raided, took all your camels, and killed the servants. I'm the only one who got away." And while he was still speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting in a house, and a great wind struck it—it collapsed, and they're all dead."

Everything Job had was wiped out in one day.

Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). In all this, Job did not sin.

So God said to Satan, "Have you noticed Job? He lost everything, and he's still faithful."

Satan said, "He's even worse than I thought. He didn't care about the kids or the servants—he only cares about himself. He's healthy, that's all he cares about. Take away his health, and we'll see how he does."

God said, "Okay, but spare his life."

So Satan went back to afflict Job, and Job was covered with terrible, painful boils and sores all over his body. He had nothing left. His health was gone. He was in constant physical torment, scraping his sores with a piece of pottery and living in total misery.

Mrs. Job—his wife—came to him and said, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die.” Thanks, honey. I really needed that! She had no use for God and apparently not much for Job at the moment either. He replied, “You are talking like one of the foolish women. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:9–10). Still, Job did not sin.

Job had some friends, and they were almost as helpful as his wife. They actually were good friends in one sense—they came and sat with him for a whole week without saying anything because they saw how miserable he was. But then they started talking. Unfortunately, like most of us, they were better when they were quiet than when they started explaining things.

They were true prosperity theologians. They believed that if you trust God and obey him, things go well. And they were also good at logic—so if things aren’t going well for you, if you’re sick and suffering, obviously you did something wrong. “If God seems far away,” they said, “guess who moved?” It must be you. It couldn’t be God.

So they gave their arguments. “Job, you blew it. You need to repent. If you change, God may make things better again, but first you have to take responsibility. You brought all this on yourself.” They blamed him and shamed him. That’s how his friends treated him.

Job got angry. He told them they were scared because they didn’t want the same thing to happen to them. He told God he was upset too. In the midst of his pain, he complained to God. Yet he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). He said, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another” (Job 19:25–27). Even if it killed him, he was going to keep trusting God.

The old men couldn’t persuade him, so a young man came along, tired of listening to them. It’s great to be young because then you know it all. So he went on for a few chapters, explaining why the old guys were wrong and why he had the real insight into who God is and why all this was happening. But Job wasn’t helped by the old men or the young man.

He wanted God to show up. He demanded it. And sometimes he didn’t sound very patient. He wanted God to appear and answer him. Satan had targeted him for attack—his wealth and workers were gone, his children were dead, his health was gone, his wife said “curse God and die,” his friends blamed and shamed him. Job mourned, argued, and cried out for God to reveal himself, and he wouldn’t settle for anything less.

If you read those chapters in Job, he doesn’t always sound patient. He sounds angry and puzzled. But he persevered. He kept crying out for God to show up, and he wouldn’t settle for less.

And God showed up. He came in a great storm and whirlwind and started asking Job questions: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Are you there when I send the lightning? Do you know how to manage the snow or the stars? Can you run the world of nature? Can you handle the monsters of creation? Can you even explain the odd things like the ostrich? I made the ostrich just because I could—no brains, but there it is. What about the mighty war horse? Could

you make a horse? Could you make a hawk or an eagle? Do you know how to care for the great birds of prey?"

God basically said, "You seem to know so much—so explain it all."

God appeared with a mighty display of power and a barrage of questions, and that was enough for Job. God showed up. That was all Job wanted.

Job said, "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5–6).

Gracious God

Job was humbled, but right after being humbled, God lifted him up. God said to the friends, "You did not speak about me what was right, as my servant Job did. Go to him and ask him to pray for you, and I will forgive you." Job was vindicated before his friends. He forgave them and prayed for them.

Then God poured out blessings again—this time double. Twice as many sheep, twice as many oxen, twice as many camels, twice of everything. And though you can't replace children, those who were in glory with God were not lost forever. God gave Job seven more sons and three more daughters—three of the most beautiful women in the land, Scripture says.

So Job again had a family, his prosperity was restored, and his honor renewed.

James says, "You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about." Literally, it says, "You have seen the end of the Lord"—not that God came to an end, but that you've seen how things end when the Lord is running them. Job kept going and kept trusting, and in the end, God stood up for the man who trusted in him. After Job showed his faithfulness, God restored everything.

God had something else going on. When we read the book of Job, we might think, "Oh, God just took this bet with Satan and had to show Satan to be wrong." But God never does things just to deal with Satan. He had something else in mind.

Remember what Job said at the end: "I had heard of you, but now I have encountered you more directly. Now I have a better sense than I ever had before of who you really are and who it is that I trust." Maybe this encounter, not any "bet" with Satan, was the most important thing all along. Satan was just the occasion for it.

Very often in your life, Satan will come after you. Bad things can happen to you, but God has his purposes. God has his end—the "end of the Lord." But the end doesn't arrive without the journey. James says you don't arrive at maturity without the sufferings that come first and the perseverance that comes through suffering. Perseverance shapes you into the kind of person God wants you to be. And all the while, as you persevere, you're getting to know God better than you ever did before.

So when he comes again, you may be the kind of person who rushes up with joy to meet him instead of cowering, because you were faithful to him. God showed up, restored Job, and Job knew God more directly than he ever had before.

James says at the end of describing Job's story, "You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:11). That's the punchline. Throughout James, you see this revelation of a gracious God:

"God gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5).

"Every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth" (James 1:18).

"Have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (James 2:1).

"Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

"God gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Sometimes he has to humble you first, but then he gives grace to the humble. "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy"—that is the most fundamental statement of who God is.

When Moses asked, "Lord, show me your glory," God said, "You cannot see me and live, but I'll show you as much as you can handle." And when he passed before Moses, proclaiming his name, he said, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God" (Exodus 34:6). When he declared his covenant name—Yahweh, Jehovah—that's what it meant: full of compassion and mercy.

That is the God we trust in, and that is the God who is coming again—the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and merciful God.

So think of the farmer, think of the prophets, think of Job, and think of the reality and greatness of God.

Do not swear

In light of all that, James adds one more thing that Jesus also said: "Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no, or you will be condemned" (James 5:12).

Learn how to speak rightly. In particular, learn to use God's name with reverence and to be a person of truth. Jesus said, "Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black" (Matthew 5:34–36). Maybe you can with hair dye—but it doesn't last. "Simply let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

If you have to use God's name or the things God made to make yourself more believable, you have a problem. Just BE believable. If you say yes, mean it. If you say no, mean it. You don't need to pinky-promise. If you shouldn't swear by your head, you shouldn't swear by your pinky

either. Just don't swear, period. Take God's name with great reverence and holiness, and let your own word be your bond.

In light of all these things, be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Be patient and stand firm. His coming is near. The Judge is standing at the door.

We live in a world full of wrongs. Address the ones you can—especially those in your own life or the ones where your action could help make things right. But realize that we are awaiting something much bigger than anything a politician will come up with in the next six months or year. We're awaiting something greater than any human civilization or country has ever achieved. Everything humans do will always be flawed and tainted by sin. Fix what you can—but be patient, because someone greater is coming.

Be in prayer to him. “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Only the kind of faith that perseveres.

Prayer

Lord, give us real faith that holds fast, that is patient under pressure, that perseveres in all circumstances. Give us courage, and above all, help us to fix our eyes on you and on the knowledge that you are coming again to make all things new. We long for you, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.

Patient Until Jesus Comes (James 5:7-12)

By David Feddes

Slide Contents

Business as usual.

- **I control the future.** I know what will happen. I plan it. I *make* it happen.
- **I care about me.** I trust wealth. I love luxury. I use and abuse others.
- **God doesn't matter.** I'm not in the last days. I won't answer to God.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

Jesus will return

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming... the Lord's coming is near.... The Judge is standing at the door! ... do not swear... or you will be condemned.

Models of patience

- Farmer
- Prophets
- Job

Faith and farming

Humbly accept the word planted in you. (1:21) My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? (3:12) Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (3:18) See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

Patient until Jesus comes

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Patient perseverance

- Declare truth amid confusion
- Stand firm under attack
- Seek revival of wavering church
- Expect troubles and keep rejoicing
- Await God's timing. Earth will be perfect only after Jesus returns.

Patient with others

^{5:9} Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

^{2:12} Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom.

Models of patience

- Farmer
- Prophets
- Job

Persevering prophets

^{5:10} Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

Persevering prophets

^{5:10} Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

- Surrounded by evil, suffering cruel attacks, the prophets kept preaching.

Persevere until crown

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials ... the testing of your faith develops perseverance... Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:2-3, 12)

Models of patience

- Farmer
- Prophets
- Job

Job's perseverance

You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Job's perseverance

- Satan targets him for attack.
- His wealth and workers are gone.
- His children are all dead.
- His wife says, "Curse God and die!"
- His friends blame and shame him.
- Job mourns, argues, and cries out God to show himself.

Job cried, God came

You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

- God showed up and restored Job.
- Job knew God more directly.

Gracious God

God **gives generously** to all without finding fault. (1:5) Every good and perfect **gift** is from above... He chose to give us **birth** through the word of truth. (1:17-18) Have **faith** in Jesus Christ (2:1). **Mercy** triumphs over judgment! (2:13) God gives **grace** to the humble. (4:6) The Lord is full of **compassion and mercy**. (5:11)

Models of patience

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- Prophets
- Job

Do not swear

¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned.

Patient until Jesus comes

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming... Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near... The Judge is standing at the door!