

“Have a Little Patience”

James 5:7-12

May 29th, 2022

It is my responsibility to preach sermons based upon the sacred Scriptures (the Bible). It can be challenging to apply such texts in light of the time of year or the holiday at hand. The US holiday originally known as “Decoration Day” has since 1971 been called “Memorial Day,” which is upon us this weekend.

The focus of today’s text of Scripture is patience. *How in the world, I asked myself multiple times this past week, am I going to tie patience and Memorial Day together?*

Some of us spent a portion of our lives serving in the US military. Regardless of the specific branch of military service, every soldier, sailor, Marine, airman, or Coast Guardsman knows at least one maxim from experience. The military’s sense of time is this: “Hurry Up...And Wait!” I often thought it was the Air Force’s way of building our patience.

For a few years, I served in one of the Air Force’s Major Commands called the Military Airlift Command (known by the acronym MAC). Those depending upon MAC aircraft often referred to that situation as Maybe Airplane Come (MAC). Soldiers often waited for lengthy periods of time for interdiction from the air to transport them somewhere or to provide air to ground fire support.

I’ll share a teaser for tomorrow’s Memorial Day observance here in Aledo where I’ll be bringing the message. On Memorial Day, we also properly remember Prisoners of War (POWs) and those Missing in Action (MIAs). According to the National League of POW/MIA Families, 1,584 American warriors who served in southeast Asia during Viet Nam remain missing and unaccounted for, 65 of them from Illinois. These families continue to await word on their loved ones. It must be hard to be patient for those in that circumstance...

In a fast-paced culture that creates an environment of instant gratification, God’s Word teaches us to be patient. The words ‘patient’ and ‘patience’ appear four times in the 6 verses of Scripture before us - **James 5:7-12**. Let’s look there now.

James 5:7-12:

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. **8** You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! **10** My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. **11** Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and *your* “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.”

A teacher had just finished putting the last pair of rubber boots on her first-graders - 32 pairs in all. The last little girl said, "You know what, teacher? These aren't my rubber boots!"

The teacher removed them from the girl's feet. Then the little girl continued, "They are my sister's boots, and she let me wear them today." The teacher quietly put them back on her student. Now, *that's* patience!

At least 4 different points are packed in 6 verses:

- **Patience is waiting on the Lord (v. 7-8);**
- **Patience means we don't grumble (v. 9);**
- **Patience manifests itself in perseverance (v. 10-11);**
- **Patience is achieved with few words (v. 12)**

Verses 7 & 8 teach us that **patience is waiting on the Lord**. "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. **8** You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

How would you define patience? The Greek word for "patience" in verse 7 means "long suffering." To be long suffering is to have or show patience in spite of troubles, especially those caused by other people. Certainly God's people were being persecuted and neglected by those who had riches. James was teaching God's people they should respond to such adversity by being patient. *That can be difficult, can it not? Maybe you are undergoing hardship because of the hardheartedness of others? James' counsel? Be patient.*

Remember, patience is a virtue. It is the art of enduring someone whose conduct is incompatible with that of others and sometimes even oppressive. It is a fruit of the Spirit. Every believer in Christ should have at least some measure of each of the 9 fruit of the Spirit - "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22**)

James' motivation for his readers to be patient is to remember the Lord is coming again to earth, this time in power and glory. He mentions this in both verses 7 and 8. We are patient to wait for Him; we should also be patient in persecution because of Whose we are.

G. Campbell Morgan once wrote, "Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given."

James uses the farmer as an illustration of patience. The farmer's success is almost entirely out of his hands. He is, in a sense, a slave to the weather. A farmer's life is governed by a rhythm of working and waiting. Farmers must work hard, plowing and sowing at the right time, and disciples of Christ must work hard at times, too.

Secondly, **patience means we don't grumble (v.9)** - "Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" It is one thing to be happy and contented when things are going well. It's another to be happy and contented when everyone is under stress. James says that to succumb to the temptation of grumbling (a complaining spirit) is to forget our Lord is standing at the door.

"The first temptation in difficult times is to find some fault with your neighbor. You are jealous that his/her life is pleasant while yours is difficult; you are angry that he/she does not do more for you; or you find some reason to blame them. More Christian friendships are broken because suffering people lash out at their brethren in the midst of their trials. Although they may ask for and receive forgiveness later, the damage has already been done." (Robertson, 75)

Grumbling and complaining are the opposite of being joyful and thankful. Even under adverse conditions, when we begin to grumble, we fall into sin. Grumbling is to accuse God for the misfortunes in our lives, and to excuse ourselves.

Thirdly, **patience manifests itself in perseverance**. Verse 10 - "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience." James uses another illustration familiar to his readers. "Think of the persecution the prophets encountered. There was Elijah with King Ahab, the hardship Jeremiah suffered at the hands of the kings of Judah, and the perseverance Daniel displayed when he was put in the lion's den during the time of the exile. All of these, and many others, suffered because they "spoke in the name of the Lord."

We come now to verse 11 - "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." You're familiar with what Job endured. He lost his family, estate and health. After losing everything he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (**Job 1:21b**)

When Job's wife urged him to curse God and die, he responded, "Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? (**Job 2:10**) To his friends who taunted him he replied, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (**Job 13:15**) I like what George Robertson says at this point in his study on James, "Job clutched to God. While he could not understand why these things were happening to him, he knew that God held the answer. God did not explain why Job suffered - He simply told Job that if He could be trusted to maintain the universe, He could be trusted with the reasons for Job's suffering." (Robertson, 77)

Further, Job (and James) knew that God was very compassionate and merciful as we read at the end of verse 11. God is more than compassionate, He is doubly compassionate (which is what "very" compassionate means). His heart goes out to the person in need of help. Compassion is synonymous with mercy.

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice, and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for *mercy*." "But your son does not deserve *mercy*," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be *mercy* if he deserved it, and *mercy* is all I ask for." "Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have *mercy*." And he spared the woman's son.

Similarly, Jesus takes the punishment we deserve and puts it on His account. He becomes sin while we become righteousness.

Fourthly, **patience is achieved with few words**. Look at verse 12 - "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment."

With this verse, James reminds us that his letter is directed to the sins of speech and the tongue.

It also echoes the teaching of Jesus in Matthew's gospel account, Chapter 5, verses 34-37, "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; **35** nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

It sounds on first read that we should never enter into an oath. But, what we have is not a prohibition of all oaths, but a prohibition of flippant oaths.

- Consider that lawful oaths are part of religious worship. This is **Deuteronomy 10:20** - "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name."
- On proper occasions believers may solemnly swear and call God to witness that what they assert or promise is true, and they may ask God to judge them according to the truth or falsehood of what they swear. This is the Apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 1:23** - "Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth."
- In **Genesis Chapter 15**, we see God Himself confirming His promise with Abraham by taking an oath.
- Jesus did not protest at being put under oath. At His trial before the High Priest, the High Priest said to Jesus, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

- **Patience is waiting on the Lord (v. 7-8);**
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God has his set times. It is not for us to know them. Indeed, we cannot know them. We must wait for them. If God had told Abraham in Haran that he must wait all those years until he pressed the promised child to his bosom, his heart would have failed him. So in gracious love, the length of the weary years was hidden. And only as they were nearly spent and there were only a few more months to wait, God told him, according to the time of life, "Sarah shall have a son."

If God told you on the front end how long you would wait to find the fulfillment of your desire or pleasure or dream, you'd lose heart. You'd grow weary in well doing. So would I. But He doesn't. He just says, 'Wait. I keep My word. I'm in no hurry. In the process of time I'm developing you to be ready for the promise.'

I close with **Psalms 27:14** - "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD."

We all could have a little patience.