

5-5-24 Finding Community (Growing Together in Christ)

Text: James 5:9, 13–20; Romans 15:5–7.

Big Idea of the Message: Living the Christian life requires caring for one another well and welcoming others into our communities.

Application Point: Christians are called to live active lives in our communities, refraining from grumbling about others, offering prayer whenever we can, and welcoming both new believers and those who have wandered away from the truth.

How many of us are patient when it comes to waiting? I spent 30 mins waiting for a Dr. appointment via zoom. Where do you hate waiting at? Sitting in church waiting for the Preacher to quit talking so you can get on with your life?

The average person spends six months of their life waiting in lines. FYI, the average person today spends 7 years of their life scrolling on their handheld devices. (YIKES!)

The Book of James was written within 30 years of the resurrection of Jesus. The church was expecting Jesus to return at any time and was probably surprised that it had not yet happened.

Think about it for a moment. These people had a tough life and were eager for Jesus to come back and deliver them from this life. Today, we do not eagerly await His return because for the most part life is easy compared to what the people of James time had to deal with.

Part of the context is that of suffering unjustly. It seemed like the rich (**verses 5:1-6**) were getting away with everything while the poor were getting cheated. Patience was starting to run thin, where was Jesus? The church was starting to fight with each other.

Read James 5:7-12.

Here are some observations.

- This passage is linked to **verses 1-6** using **“therefore,”** which means this section provides a game plan when we’re in a waiting room because of some kind of injustice.
- The tone is tender as James refers to his readers as **“brethren”** three times in **verse 7, verse 9 and verse 10.**
- The word **“patient”** is used three times in **verses 7-8** and **“patience”** is used in **verse 10.**
- The overriding focus is on the coming of Christ. Verse **7-9. “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”** This can be translated as “right on the edge; just about to happen.” It’s the next event on God’s calendar. Those who are the most persecuted look forward to the return of the Lord the most. Incidentally, did you know there are over 300 references to Christ’s return in the New Testament? That’s one out of every 13 verses!

The return of the Lord will come in two phases. The rapture of the Church, this is when Christ will return in the air and all believer’s will be “caught up”. The dead in Christ will rise first, meaning the dead bodies of the saints that have gone on before the “catching up” will rise from the ground and meet up with the souls of the saints in the air and Jesus will transform them into their new heavenly bodies. Next, believers that are still alive will be “caught up” into the air with Christ and He will

transform their bodies into their heavenly bodies. Then all those “caught up” will return with Jesus to heaven. At that time God will begin to pour His wrath on the earth, to judge, to draw and purify.

After seven years of tribulation (God’s wrath) Jesus will come back to earth again with His heavenly family, O.T. saints, Church age saints, and tribulation saints, but this time Jesus will set His feet down on the Mount of Olives, from the place He was crucified, risen from the dead and left from when He returned to the Father.

The book of James was written to the Jews, at the time the book was written the gospel hadn’t spread to the Gentiles, yet. **Reread James 1:1.** Who is the book written to? Now, that doesn’t mean we can’t apply this book to our lives. But we must interpret it right. Misinterpretation leads to misinformation.

So, we, the Church are waiting for the rapture of the Church, the catching up, or death from old age. How do we apply **James 5:7-12** to our lives? We can apply the same instructions that James gave the early Jews.

1. Be patient.

• **Read verse 7.**

- The phrase, “**coming of the Lord**” speaks of His anytime arrival. We must live every day with the realization that Jesus could come back this day. Because He’s coming soon, we (you and I) must be patient with people.... yeah, I know what you are thinking. “Preacher, have you seen the freak show we call life? Have you stood in a check out line in Walmart lately?”
- God is running the checkout lane. We need to always realize that we are on God’s timetable, and He will not be late.
- Are you patient with the people God has put in your life? (Some people and sometimes, but most of the time people are ridiculous!)

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Psalm 37:7 ESV

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 ESV

- God is holding in check the wrath that we are due because He is being patient with us. God wants ALL to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth, He desires to see everyone be saved, this is one of the reasons Jesus has yet to return.
- If you and I were in God’s position, if we could be God for a day, we would have already asked for the check.
- But we are not, and God instructs us to be patient while we wait for His prophetic calendar to unfold.

2. Be ready to endure.

• **Read verse 8.**

- The word “**establish**” is the idea of being stable and standing fast and was also used of being equipped. This same verb is found **in Luke 9:51: “Jesus set his face to go to**

Jerusalem.” This person is so certain of the Lord’s imminent return that he or she is not wiped out by what’s happening in the present.

- The phrase **“at hand”** shows we must persevere because the Lord will not only come soon, but He will also come suddenly! I like how the KJV renders it: **“draweth nigh.”** The Lord is constantly drawing nearer. **Verse 11** says we are blessed when we remain **“endure,”** which means, “to bear up under our trials.”
- When you’ve been wronged, wait for or on the Lord, and while waiting in the checkout lane, do what’s right.

We’re not only told what to do while we’re waiting – be patient with people and endure our problems; we’re also given some examples, so we know how to do it.

- Keep waiting like a farmer. (James 5:7) To **“wait”** means to “look for and expect.” God’s purposes are worked out over long periods of time. No farmer sows his seed and goes out a week later expecting a mature crop. The crop is worth waiting for. The phrase **“precious fruit”** means “costly and esteemed.” How long should I continue to wait?

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
Gal. 6:9

“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” Psalm 27:14

- Keep witnessing like the prophets. (Read James 5:10) When we feel like giving up or giving in, let’s look at the prophets who patiently endured and yet never stopped speaking in the name of the Lord. Jesus tells us we are blessed when we are persecuted and then points to the example of those who went before us in **Matthew 5:12: “For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**
- Keep worshipping like Job. (Read James 5:11) To **“endure”** refers to abiding under difficulties. Interestingly, James is the only New Testament book that explicitly mentions Job. God had a purpose in mind all along for Job, just as He does when you and I go through problems and persecution and stress and sickness. Let’s forge ahead and keep worshipping like Job did.

We can’t forget or not look at what God says we shouldn’t do while we wait and endure.

1. **Don’t battle against others.**
 - **Read verse 9.**
 - To **“grumble”** means to “murmur or groan.” The tense indicates they were in the practice of grumbling, griping, and grouching against each other. They had forgotten they were brothers and sisters, or maybe that’s why they had turned on each other!

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” Lev. 19:18 ESV

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, Eph. 4:2 ESV

- Let’s not be “grumpsters” who throw each other in dumpsters! Nothing destroys Christian unity quicker than believers grumbling against one another. Our internal bickering,

backbiting, grumbling and groaning can knock us off mission. Warren Wiersbe says, “If we start using the sickles on each other, we will miss the harvest!”

- This is a challenge because most of us are natural born grumblers and a few of us are year-round residents at “Camp Complaining.” Many of us whine more than we worship, and gripe more than we express gratitude.
- The second half of **James 5:9** gives us an incentive to stop grumbling and groaning: **“Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”** James catches our attention by using **“behold,”** which can be translated as, “Hey, listen up!” Jesus **“THE”** Judge. He’s not merely a judge; He is **THE** Judge!
- James is referring to a judgment hall with huge double doors that the judge would come through to hear cases. When tempted to grumble or groan against a brother or sister, don’t forget Judge Jesus is about to push open the doors to begin court.

2. Don’t bail on God.

- When it’s hard to count on people and when our problems are cascading upon us, we can always count on the character of God.
- The word **“compassionate” (v.11)** literally means, “abounding in bowels of compassion.” The Lord is “full” of compassion or “extremely compassionate.”
- Sadly, the compassion and mercy of God are the very qualities we begin to question when we go through difficult times. Satan wasted no time trying to get Adam and Eve to doubt God’s goodness toward them...and he follows the same strategy today.
- Whatever you’re struggling with right now remember this: the Lord is full of compassion and has a massive amount of mercy for you. Declare with the psalmist in **Psalm 119:68: “You are good and do good.”**
- I wonder if some of us bail on God simply because we think too much of ourselves and too little of the Lord. We mistakenly think God owes us something good because we somehow deserve it.
- That attitude can lead to swearing or making false promises according to **verse 12.** (Read it)

Conclusion

Years ago, Ruth Bell Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, saw a sign by the road: “End of Construction, Thank you for your patience.” Smiling, she remarked that she wanted those words on her gravestone. After her death in 2007, her desire was carried out. Her grave marker bears the Chinese character for righteousness (she was born in China), followed by the words that made her smile. “End of Construction, Thank you for your patience.”

Listen. We’re all under construction! I’ve always liked the phrase, “Be patient with me – God’s not finished with me yet!”

Some of us are frustrated with our own progress and we’ve become impatient.

Do you feel like you’ve hit a wall? Could it be you haven’t placed your faith and trust in the saving knowledge of Jesus, yet? Perhaps you’ve been trying to fix yourself and you’re discouraged because it hasn’t worked.

Do you feel stopped and you’re not sure where to turn?

Do you feel like your luck has run out?

It's time to confess that Jesus Christ is the only way!

One Author wrote:

Religion says 'attain.' The gospel says 'obtain.' Religion says 'try.' The gospel says 'trust.'

You could turn to Him right now and trust Him by praying this prayer...

Lord, I admit I am a sinner and deserve your just judgment. I repent from trying to follow my own way and now turn to you as the only way. I believe Jesus died in my place on the cross and rose again on the third day and now I receive Him into my life. Please save me from my sins and from Your righteous wrath. I want to be born again so I place all my trust in You and You alone.

We wonder if God's renovation work in our lives will ever be completed. It's hard to wait, isn't it? Brethren, let's hold on to **Philippians 1:6: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."** This is another reference to the return of Christ!

God is doing His good work while we're in the waiting room.

God is running the checkout lane.

Our time in the checkout time will come. Keep expectantly waiting, witnessing and worshipping!

Use your time wisely while waiting to checkout. Stay positive (no grumbling)! Don't get out of line (don't bail on God)!

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:5-7 ESV