

James 5:7-11 Patience ¹

Before the Lesson: Make copies of the handout, “Patience, Practice and Prayer as We Wait”.

Fellowship question: (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion, and to lead into the study):

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank your patience threshold? (1 is low, 10 is high)

If someone is late to meet with you, how much time passes before you grow impatient?

Information

Advent is a season of preparing to welcome Jesus. In this series of Advent lessons, we are focusing on the second advent of Jesus. Why do we want Jesus to return? (Allow time for answers. Some could be: to be with Jesus and loved ones in heaven; to see evil doers face God’s wrath; to have no more pain or sorrow or tears; so we will be perfect, etc.)

One reason we want Jesus to return is because the world isn’t right. In his letter to the early church, James goes after some of those who were making the world wrong.

- Have a class member read James 5:1-6.

“The threat to the rich [5:1-6] is an indication that there will be an end to the oppression, and that readers should therefore be patient.”²

- Have a class member read James 5:7-11.

There are a couple of Greek words that are translated as patience. One has to do with anger or wrath. The other has to do with enduring hardships. James uses the first word in verses

“The word *makrothymia*, unlike other compounds of *thymos* (anger, wrath)...describes a typically human virtue: the prolonged restraint of *thymos*, of anger or agitation, i.e., patience, longsuffering (contrast *oxythymia*, sudden anger).”³

¹ This lesson is copyrighted by Dr. Rick Jordan, Great Bible Teachers, Inc, 2024. More lessons may be found at greatbibleteachers.com.

² Laws, 208.

³ U. Falkenroth and C. Brown, s.v., “Patience,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 769.

“The verb *makrothumeo* denotes a patient waiting rather than an active endurance of suffering, for which (although the verbs are to some extent synonymous) *hupomoneo* would be the usual expression.”⁴

“After 5:1-6, James wants to speak encouragement to the faithful...with a bracing imperative, *makrothymesate*...patient waiting for delivery...[is] used in 5, 7, 10; but in 5:11, James uses the other word [for patience], *hypomeno*; this meets the distinction between patiently *waiting* for the Day of the Lord, or the growth of the seed, or the fulfillment of prophecies, as contrasted, say, with *enduring* the boils of Job.”⁵

“James tells them they must ‘strengthen their hearts’ (5:8). As always in this composition, the heart refers to human intentionality; in effect, he is instructing his readers to stay focused. This means first they must be patient. By this, he means more than that they should endure, for the word he chooses (*makrothymia*), is used for the attitude of ‘long-suffering’ judges.”⁶

A key Gospel passage relating to patience is the parable of the unforgiving servant.

- Have a class member read Matthew 18:23-35.

“This parable may almost be said to sum up the whole New Testament teaching on the matter [of patience].”⁷

“Here the mercy of God (v. 27) is unlimited and the debt of man so incalculably great that he cannot possibly pay it...The [patience] of God to which the debtor appeals consists essentially, not in indulgence or postponement, but in the full and unsurpassable readiness of generous and forgiving grace. Nevertheless, this is so highly estimated that it must be expected that the man who has really taken it seriously will be basically altered in his own attitude toward his fellows...This indissoluble relating of the known love of God with neighborly love is something which we find again and again in Jesus.”⁸

⁴ Laws, 208.

⁵ James Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 190.

⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *James*, The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 221.

⁷ U. Falkenroth and C. Brown, 769.

⁸ J. Horst, “*makrothumeo* and *makrothymia*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 380.

“James 5:7-11 links together the two aspects [of patience], namely that extended to our fellow man and that which is needed to cope with all the trials and tribulations of this world until the parousia.”⁹

We call the season before Christmas, Advent, a Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival.” It refers to the first arrival of Jesus. Believers anticipated the return of Jesus almost immediately. The Greek word for this second advent is *parousia*. (paa·roo·see·uh)¹⁰

“Parousia in the New Testament characteristically denotes the return of Christ. It has indeed almost the status of a technical term, being found in this connection in NT documents from the earliest to the latest. The original meaning of the word is ‘presence’, but it takes on the meaning of ‘coming, advent as the first stage of presence’¹¹”¹²

The early church faced persecution from their religious leaders and their political leaders. Naturally, they longed for peace and safety and health. They believed that all of these would be accomplished with Jesus’ return.

“A declaration of the nearness of the End seems often to be associated with the experience, or expectation, of suffering, and therefore with the assurance that this will not have to be long endured.”¹³

We who do not face persecution for our faith do not look to the “second coming” as a salvation from powers that want to destroy our faith and its followers. But we do long for the world to be “right.”

What are some ways you long for the world to be made right?

So, like the Christians that James was addressing, we wait. We are in an in-between time. We believe that Jesus will come, that evil will be vanquished, death will be defeated, and that our joy will be complete. But, like them, we wait.

⁹ U. Falkenroth and C. Brown, 771.

¹⁰ “The time when Jesus Christ will return to judge humanity at the end of the world...Greek, literally, presence, from *paront-*, *parōn*.” Source: “Parousia.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parousia>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2024.

¹¹ Quoting from *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, 1957.

¹² Laws, 208

¹³ Laws, 209.

James K. A. Smith compares this waiting for the *parousia* to buying a house: “The offer is accepted, your new reality has dawned. Wait for the inspection. Wait for the assessment. Then that curious season of escrow in which ‘your’ house is occupied by hangers-on who seem to be squatting in your house. You’re buying curtains and stockpiling paint swatches and already planning your first party. But you have to wait. You have to dwell in what Auden calls ‘the Time Being.’ The Christian life is like living in escrow: the Creator has re-taken possession, but we’re waiting for closing.”¹⁴

James uses the farmer as an illustration.

“Like the farmer, Christians must be patient and strengthen their hearts (compare 1 Thes 3:13). In both instances such confidence is based on hope; the farmer is sure the rains will fall, and the Christian that the Lord will come. The tense of the verb indicates that the coming is near.”¹⁵

Why has it taken Jesus so long to return? The early church wondered about that. Peter answered that it was due to God’s patience, also called God’s longsuffering.

- Have a class member read 2 Peter 3:9.

“God’s longsuffering is related to [God’s] wrath (Rom 2:4; 9:22)... [Longsuffering or patience] can never imply irresolution on the part of God as if [God] could decide only after a period of waiting. Nor does it imply compliance or indulgence. God’s patience does not overlook anything. It simply sees farther than man. It has the end in view.”¹⁶

Meantime, we wait. And we wait with other people, some of whom are irritating. Yes, they are brothers and sisters in Christ, but some of them are disagreeable and unfaithful and dumb. Some are jerks. I’m not talking about any of us in this room, of course. But some of those people in the classroom next door... What are we going to do about these less-than-perfect people?

Be patient.

- Have a class member read 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

We are to love them. And a primary manifestation of our love is patience.

- Have a class member read 1 Corinthians 13:4.

¹⁴ James K. A. Smith, *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2022), 146.

¹⁵ Adamson, 191.

¹⁶ Horst, 382.

This patience comes from God. It is the fruit of the Spirit of God.

- Have a class member read Galatians 5:22.

“[In James,] it comes to suggest a triumphant steadfastness which does not come from the heroic depths of one's own heart but from certainty of the proximity of the parousia. Awareness of His nearness quenches all angry feelings against opponents and all overhasty sighings and murmurings against brothers [and sisters] since both parties will stand before this Judge.”¹⁷

Transformational Exercise

In a few minutes, we will say the Lord's Prayer. There is a sense of urgency in this prayer. The first request we make is that God will make the world right again. We pray that we might have food for this day. We pray that God will be patient with us by forgiving us our sins. Some translations say, “forgive us our debts” as the indebted servant needed forgiving. And as he needed to forgive other's debts, we promise to do that. We pray that we will be kept from temptations that urge us to live wrong. We pray that we will be delivered from all evils. We celebrate that God will make all things right, as only God can.

We do our part by living as Kingdom of God children *now*. Our prayer is not a passive posture. In all we pray for, we are active partners with God in revealing the Kingdom.

“Every day we pray for God's kingdom *to come*. But as long as we are praying it, it hasn't arrived yet, which means we are also a *waiting* people....To live eschatologically is not just a matter of looking toward the future. It is not simply a posture of expectation. It is to live *futurally*, to inhabit the present in such a way that the future is the beating heart of my now...Living futurally is living in such a way that my very mode of being-in-the-world is infused with anticipation. Instead of being defined by my waiting, my active life is shaped by what I hope for. I am acting now on the basis of the future. I receive myself from the future. I am what I am called to be.”¹⁸

Let's close by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

¹⁷ Horst, 385.

¹⁸ Smith, 148, 152. Author's italics.

Patience, Practice, and Prayer as We Wait

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Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

¹⁹ U. Falkenroth and C. Brown, 771.

²⁰ Smith, 148, 152. Author’s italics.