

Be Patient Until the Lord Comes

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

For those of you that weren't with us on Tuesday, the title of the message was "When You Encounter Various Trials." If you're taking notes, you should write that down because it's really important. When you encounter various trials. James wrote to readers who were suffering and you can see that he states his theme and his purpose right in the opening verses and he gets right down to business right from the start.

Look at the first four verses with me by way of review. "James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings." And he jumps right into it. He's direct. He's blunt. I like that. He's a plain-spoken man and we should rejoice that God's word speaks to us so plainly when he says in verse 2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Now by the standards of the world, this passage is remarkably incoherent and incongruent with what we would expect. The world spends its time avoiding trials, drinking itself out of awareness of its trials and drugging itself into oblivion so as to avoid the nature of real life, or pursuing the objects of sports and entertainment as distractions, doing whatever is necessary to find something to engage that is very temporary and passing and doing these things that take our minds off of what life is really like. James will have none of that. James recognizes the reality of trials and tells us not only to face them but to face them with joy, to face them with a sense of gladness and even a sense of worship as they come into our lives. And knowing that you and I don't naturally respond even as believers that way to the difficulties that come our way, to the sorrows, to the disappointments, to the frustrations that enter into our lives, how could it be more obvious than the fact that we need this instruction from God's word. He says to consider it all joy. Now we're going to see toward the end of the book why that's even possible, but James here has set the tone from the beginning. He says, "You will encounter trials." It's not if, it's when. "When you encounter various trials," James says in response with his letters, "this is how you are to respond."

Now as I pointed out on Tuesday and I think this is a very important point, given how blunt and direct James is in his instructions and in the commands that he gives to the people of God in this letter, it's so important for you to take quick note there in verse 2,

look at it with me, look at it and realize that he is addressing us as brethren. He is addressing us in a spirit of Christian love. He has just said that he's a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ so he's writing out of his own commitment to Christ and he speaks to his readers and he says, "Brethren, you who are of like precious faith with me, you share in this like faith in Christ with me, you are my brothers as I write to you." He writes to us with a family sympathy, with the love of a sibling that speaks to us and, as it were, puts his arm around us from the very beginning and says, "I know you're suffering, I know this is difficult, and here is the word of God for you through my humble pen."

So we are getting a most practical, a most necessary letter from James here and we are receiving it from one who speaks to us brother to brother, and what I said on Tuesday is that it's just so important to remember that brother to brother aspect of the letter because he says some things that are hard to hear. It's a hard-hitting letter. It is direct. It confronts us in our sinful tendencies and in our sinful attitudes and it says, "This is the wrong way to respond to trials. Here is what you are to do."

Now beloved, with all of that said, that has an impact for us here this morning, for you, for me, it means that we need to come to the word of God today with a teachable spirit because you know as well as I do, we're just gonna be direct, we're gonna be very practical here this morning, you know as well as I do that we have the tendency to stiffen our neck in trials if we're not getting what we want, if things aren't going our way, if life has disappointed us and it's obvious that it's not going to come back to the way that we wanted, we tend to, we're tempted toward resentment and toward anger and toward objecting and saying, "Why is this? This is so unfair and why is God treating me this way?" We have those carnal tendencies in our heart. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit comes to us with the spiritual scalpel and says, "We need to excise that from your heart so that you would respond and grow in faith in the way that you are to do." And as we do that, we find that joy starts to replace the resentment, joy and gladness start to replace the confusion and the disappointment and the discouragement because our focus has been changed. And James is not writing to take away our trials, he's not writing to replace what is happening with what we want, he says, "This is life and this is how you are to respond in the midst of it." So as Christians who are under the authority of Christ and under the authority of the word of God, we come to this perhaps with tears streaming down our face, perhaps with spiritual bruises on our spiritual body, so to speak, but we come to it with an attitude this morning here at Truth Community Church, we come to it with an attitude that says, "Speak, Lord. Your servant listens." And that's the spirit with which we are going to approach this book of James here this morning.

So the title of Tuesday's message was "When You Encounter Various Trials." That's really important because the title of today's message gives us the response to it. It's written there in your bulletin and just by way of, you know, kind of stealing my own thunder here, today's message is titled "Be Patient Until the Lord Comes." Tuesday's message "When You Encounter Various Trials," today's message titled "Be Patient Until the Lord Comes," together giving us a short synopsis that puts and imprints upon us the principle that James would have for us. Beloved, when you encounter various trials in your life, you be patient until the Lord comes, and what James does under those themes is

he shows us what that is like. So when you in your life encounter various trials, what is it that you're to do? When your children are difficult? When your parents are difficult? When your spouse is difficult? When your job is difficult? Beloved, I say it sympathetically, I say it to brethren, I say it as one with like carnal tendencies of your own, when you encounter various trials, what do you do?

Well, James gives us a summary before he gets into the meat of his letter. In James 1:19-21, you see a summary of it and he says this, he says, "This you know, my beloved brethren," see it again, "my beloved brethren"? He loves us as he's writing this. There should be no idea that James is just a strawy epistle as some have said in church history, that should not have even been included in the canon. No, we don't believe that at all. This is a letter that speaks to us as beloved brethren, as those beloved by Christ himself and he says in verse 19, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." There is no room for anger or resentment in your trials but instead there should be this developed disposition in your heart that is quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, and what is it that you're quick to hear? What is it that you are slow to speak in response to? Slow to anger in response to? Verse 21, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness," all that would tempt and prompt you toward ungodly responses in your trial, identify them and set them aside, put them off, as it were, and put on this instead, "putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." In humble submission to God your Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ, receive the word that they have given and follow its directions and submit to what it has to say in the midst of your trials. When you encounter various trials, James say, you be quick to hear the word of God, you be slow to speak in response to it and slow to anger in response to your circumstances.

Now beloved, I know that many of you need to hear this. I know that many of you are prone to quick tempers and many of you are prone to being stubborn, and therefore the word of God is particularly addressing you here this morning. The summary of it all when you encounter various trials is this and what James is saying and we're treating this in a very much a satellite view here this morning, the summary of it all, James says, is that you patiently submit to God in the midst of your trials as you look to Christ, patiently submit to God as you look to Christ in trusting faith.

Then what James does is he explains and he illustrates throughout his letter what this patient submission looks like. What does it look like to be quick to hear and slow to speak? Well, on Tuesday we looked at four principles and we're gonna have four more this morning, and what he is doing is he's showing us – oh, this is so very important. I say that a lot, don't I? I say that because the word of God is important. So, you know, when you're explaining the word of God, that naturally comes out of my mind, this is important for us. What James is showing us here is he is showing us what godly perseverance looks like. What does it look like to be a godly Christian in the midst of your various trials? What does it mean to persevere and to be patient and to wait on God in the midst of circumstances that you naturally dislike? What does that look like? James is showing us.

The first thing that he says is to respond in trust instead of bitterness. Trust God instead of resenting your circumstances, in other words. Respond in trust instead of bitterness. James says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God." Go to God and trustingly ask him for wisdom to find your path forward. Actually pray. Actually stop what you're doing. Actually look at this verse and direct your thoughts consciously to God and say, "My Father, I need wisdom here because this is difficult and I don't know what to do." Actually do that as an act of trust. Verbally pray to him instead of just bitterly, sullenly resenting what has come into your life because God gives wisdom to those who humbly ask.

Now secondly, we said that you are to receive the word instead of speaking your mind. We're all too prone to trust in our own wisdom, our own assessment, our own desires. It's all too easy for us to say, "This cannot be good. I don't like this and this is not a good situation." If God has brought things into your life, whatever they are, he has good purposes in it because the Bible says, does it not, "He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose"? James says, "Consider it all joy." And so rather than asserting your opinion about your circumstances, James says receive the word instead, and that's what he was saying there in verse 19, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, and in humility receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls, is able to give you inner direction, an understanding in the midst of your trials, and to find and give you the deliverance that you need in the midst of them, even if your circumstances don't change.

Beloved, I say this in the same spirit of James when he says, "My beloved fellow believers in Christ," you and I have to shut our mouth long enough to let God's word speak into our hearts, to adopt the position of a learner rather than one who's interpreting what's happening to you in a negative way. You have to be quiet and humble yourself before the word of God and say, "Lord, use Your word to shape and change me." And what you need to understand, beloved, is that God doesn't do this, it's not the nature of God to do this in 15 minutes, he does this over the course of time. You receive the word over the course of time. You go to him humbly again and again as you're under the weight of that chronic trial and say, "God, I still need wisdom and I'm still listening to Your word." This is what godly perseverance looks like. This is what that humble response that James is calling for as you patiently submit to God, that's what it looks like. You learn that you have two hands and you have two ears, two ears to listen double of what you speak, and two hands to quickly put them over your mouth when you are tempted to speak arrogantly against God or to complain against him or to doubt his goodness to you. When you find that happening in your heart, beloved, take either your left hand or your right, preferably both, and put them quickly on your mouth, "I can't talk that way about my God. I can't talk that way about the Lord Jesus Christ who loved me and gave Himself up for my sins at Calvary. How can I speak against the one who left heaven, left the glories of heaven in order to give His life for the salvation of my soul, the forgiveness of my sins? How can I speak against Him and how can I doubt His love once now that He has done that? So whatever else is happening in my trials, I cannot and I will not, I refuse to speak against my God in the midst of it." And we start to train our hearts

toward trust and humble submission instead of questioning God or acting like we don't have the resources to deal with what we're facing.

Beloved, in Christ and in the indwelling Holy Spirit and with the help of his inerrant infallible word, you have all the resources you need to respond to your trials with joy and with obedience and with submission. Period. That's what God's word says and we're not going to qualify or diminish what God's testimony is to his own word simply because we feel oppressed by our circumstances now, are we? We're not going there. That's not where Christians go in response to life. We receive the word instead of speaking out minds.

Not thirdly from James 1:26 and 27, we said to reach out to others instead of isolating yourself. You're not the only one who is in need. The tendency is to withdraw and feel sorry for yourself. I get all of that but what we have to understand is that that's not what we're called to. We're not called to have that self-centered response even in the midst of our trials and so James says, "Soften your heart to others in need," and he uses orphans and widows as an illustration. This is true in pure religion, to visit widows and orphans in their need; to step out; to minister in obedience to the word of God even in the midst of your trial; to take your focus off of self and to place it in the hands of God for his service in ministering to those who are in need.

Fourthly, we said that you renew your obedience instead of excusing sin, and we looked at the last half of James 2 in that, and what we said was that true faith is accompanied by righteous works even in the midst of our trials. I didn't understand this many many years ago as I was going through the inevitable early trials of a Christian life. Sooner or later, those of you that are new believers, sooner or later trials will come to you unexpected, difficult, far more than what you expected, hurting far more than what you thought was possible, this is to be expected in the Christian life. This is what happens. It's part of the natural growth of being a Christian. It's where you come from that initial newborn faith and God brings the process of growth to bear upon you. Well, for an actual physical baby infant, that growth comes from feeding and all of that. Well, part of the way that God brings growth and injects growth into your life is through various trials and when you encounter them, you need to understand, "Okay, this is what Scripture spoke about. Now I need to respond to it." What I didn't understand in those early years, when those trials come it does not somehow suspend our responsibility to obey God's word, to love and worship him, to respond in obedience, because true faith is accompanied by works even in trials.

So we looked at that on Tuesday and we asked the question again as we shift into new material for this morning: when you encounter various trials, what do you do? What do you do? Well, what we see from the book of James is this and, oh, this is really important and I'm glad for the opportunity to be able to say this in light of all of the teaching that we've done here over the years. Beloved, understand this, this will change your whole mindset if it's never been brought to your attention before: endurance in your trials is more than passive waiting for your circumstances to change. Endurance is more than passive waiting for your circumstances to change. There is an active component of

obedience in it and those first four principles are part of that and then James goes on and he continues to say, "When I call you to consider it all joy, when I call you to endurance," he is telling us throughout the letter what that endurance looks like, and there is a conscious element of intent and response and active obedience to the word of God that informs your endurance, but it so much more than simply sitting down, collapsing in discouragement and just sitting down and saying, "I'm gonna stay here until this passes." That's not what endurance is. Endurance looks to honor Christ with your obedience, with your faith, with your active trust even while you are waiting for God to change the circumstances. You obey in the midst of it, not after it. You don't say, "Well, I get around to following God and being obedient to Christ when this is done." On what ground do we suspend our obedience to the all-authoritative God in his word? You see, we just tend to want to define what our appropriate response is and James is having none of it, and as humble, submissive believers this morning before the word of God, we come again and we say, "Okay, Lord, then speak because Your servant is listening."

What does patient endurance and humble submission to God look like? Well, we come to our fifth point this morning and this is where the new material begins. First of all, you restrain your tongue instead of stirring strife. You restrain your tongue instead of stirring strife. One of the ways that you manifest endurance in your trials, patience in your adversity, is by – and this is hard for some of you but you need to hear it – it is by controlling what you say, by watching what comes out of your mouth. James could not be more clear or direct on this.

Look at James 1:19 again. Remember, we're seeing this as kind of a summary, an overall preview of what follows in the letter, and he says in verse 19, he says, "you be slow to speak." So holding your tongue is a key to patient endurance in trials and James goes into the tongue, goes into this matter of what comes out of our mouths at great length in chapter 3, so much so that he says in verse 1 even, this restrains even those who would be teachers of the word of God. He says in James 3:1, he says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." What is he saying there except applying the principle, "Hey, be slow to speak." Teaching involves speaking. James says, "Be slow to undertake that."

And why should we be slow? Because in verse 2, "we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the great ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things." Now beloved, I believe that what he is saying here in connection to the overall context of the whole letter is that he's telling us and showing us that our tongue has a way of leading us through our trials and either it's going to lead us into disobedience and a bad response or it can lead us into patient endurance because he says the tongue is directing our response just like the rudder of a ship directs where it goes. We have to be careful about following our restless, complaining tongue because it will carry our faith with us as we go.

So that means that recognizing that power that the tongue has, we say, "Oh, then I'm going to be very careful with what I do. I'm gonna watch what I say in the midst of these afflictions so that my tongue doesn't take me away from the patient endurance that I am supposed to observe." Beloved, recognize this, recognize this, I beg you, that under the provocation, under the pressure of adversity, your mouth is a threat to your soul. Do you see what I was just saying is that the tongue will lead you in your trials if you're not watching what you're doing, and James says the tongue has the ability to set on fire the course of your entire life. Beloved, what that means is that if you are under the midst of particularly difficult trials right now, you need to stop everything and just recognize this basic principle, "I am in a position of vulnerability here and I am vulnerable in what my tongue might say either to myself, to God or to others. I need to watch what comes out of my mouth as a means of responding in the patient endurance that God calls me to."

Look at verse 7, he says, "For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." He says, "Yes, this is the reality. Yes, this is how, brethren, we sometimes act but it shouldn't be that way and we should not accept it as the proper way for us to respond to trials by just venting every complaint and dissatisfaction that we have in our hearts." You say, "But, but, but my mouth goes 100 miles a minute." I know. I know, mine does too. I preach for a living. It scares me sometimes. But the fact that you are naturally outspoken does not excuse you from the caution and the command of these verses in this context that we're talking about. I realize some of us are more verbal than others, that's okay, but what James is saying is that in the midst of your adversity you've got to watch your mouth because your speech is a reflection of your character. Jesus said, "The mouth speaks from that which," what? "Fills the heart." And trials have a way of bringing pressure to bear that causes what's actually in your heart to squirt out. It brings the pressure and what's in your heart comes out when the pressure wouldn't otherwise reveal it.

What's your tongue been like in your recent adversity, beloved? Has it shown the fruit of trusting Christ or has it shown something lesser? You see, this is what James is addressing for us here today and he's saying that negative stuff is not the aspect of patient endurance. Wise tongues do something else. What do wise tongues do? Look at verse 13, "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

In the whole context of that chapter, James is saying that wise tongues of faith reflect godliness even in the midst of difficult times and so, beloved, watching your words, watching your tongue, thinking about what is coming out of your mouth is a means of developing the endurance that he calls you to. Remember that these trials are designed to produce endurance. These trials you could go further and say these trials are designed to change you from one image of glory in Christ to another, to a higher, to a more lofty one, and in the midst of these things, my dear friends, in the midst of the adversity, watch your tongue and realize that James is saying that endurance comes and the godly endurance that it is designed to produce is to effect a change in your heart that is reflected in the way that you speak. Man, James gets in our kitchen, doesn't he? He gets right in where we're cooking the food and says we've gotta change the recipe here, and we need to use different ingredients here. You say, "James, what are you doing in my kitchen?" "Well, I'm your brother," he says, "writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this is what God would have for you," he says to us in the direct but peaceable nature of his instruction.

There's a sixth point that he gives us. I've titled it this way: that you are to react in humility instead of pride. React in humility instead of pride and now he goes from being in our kitchen to just stepping right up to the stove and taking the spatula away from it and scraping it around on the skillet. So direct, personal and immediate is what he has to say to us. Beloved, you know and I know that it is the nature of trials that they tend to produce problems in relationships. Marriages go on the rocks when trials come, so often. For example, it's the nature of trials that as they bring out and they bring up the remaining carnality in our hearts, that that carnality in your heart and that carnality in my heart creates conflict. This is not good and we have to recognize that and diagnose it to understand it so that we could respond with the kind of patient endurance that James is calling us to.

Look at chapter 4, verse 1. He says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel." Stop there for a moment. This is so humbling because it's so direct to real life and to where we all tend to live at one time or another. He says, "You are fighting because you're not getting what you want." That's the problem here. It's not your circumstances, it's that there is this sinful, jealous ambition and desire in your heart that you have not restrained, that you have not repented of. You're giving vent to it and that's creating the conflict and quarreling that you find going on in your lives in the midst of your trials. James says, he reminds us of what he said back in chapter 1, verse 5, he said, "Remember," he said, "let him ask of God." He said, "You do not have because you do not ask. Your quarreling is a sign of the fact that you've not taken to heart the things that were said in the first chapter."

Then in verse 3, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." You're being selfish in prayer rather than really humbling yourself and asking for wisdom from God that you intend to obey. No, you're

just asking because you want what you want. James says this is all wrong. You've got it all wrong. Your motives are all wrong.

Verse 4, he says, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?'" That's a very difficult verse to understand there, verse 5, but God I think in part what it's saying is, is that God has put his Holy Spirit in true believers and he intends and desires for the fruit of that Spirit to be manifested in our lives, particularly in our trials. That is his purpose, is that in your trials, beloved, rather than these fights and quarrels that come about, you see how practical this is, rather than the fights and the quarrels, you would be submitting to God's word, trusting him in prayer, responding in obedience so that the fruit of the Spirit is manifested in your life instead. And what is that fruit? Galatians 5:22-23, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." All of those aspect of character that are in opposition to the carnal things that we've been talking about here this morning.

So beloved, when those conflicts pop up in the midst of your adversity, James is telling you, "Here's what you need to do." It is consistent with the theme that we've articulated all along, when those conflicts come up, beloved, it is a call to you to humility, to humble yourself, to submit to God and to trust him even if life is going contrary to what you want it to be.

Look at verse 6, he says, "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." James is pleading with you, the word of God and with the Spirit's work in your heart is pleading with you this morning to recognize that in your trials, your God is a faithful loving Father who is willing, able and ready to bless you in the midst of it but you need to humble yourself and ask, you need to humble yourself and trust, you need to humble yourself and obey the word of God. This is what patient endurance looks like and, beloved, I'll say it again, therefore you start to see how there is an active component to endurance. "Oh, I consciously think about these things. Oh, I consciously ask God. Oh, I consciously do this and that which is given to us."

Verse 8, we see the put on, put off. Put on drawing near to God. Put off this, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." And one of the aspects of humility is that it refuses to judge another believer.

Verse 11, here's part of humility, reacting in humility rather than in pride. Verse 11, "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is

able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" He says, "Humble yourself." After he said, "Submit to God, humble yourself." He goes right into this and says, "Contemplate the relationships around you." And once again, Scripture is asserting ourselves over against our judgmental hearts and what humble trust does instead of judging others, instead of complaining and quarreling, what humble trust does is this, it depends on God for all of life even in our trials.

Look at verse 13 with me. Chapter 4, verse 13, he says, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'" Beloved, that sounds reasonable to our worldly materialistic minds, especially in the 21st century. "I'm gonna go do this and that. I'm gonna be there for so long and I'm gonna make money while I do it." James says that whole mindset needs to be repented of.

Verse 14, he says, "you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow." You've forgotten who you are. "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." In your pride you think you control the future and determine what the outcome will be. He says the reality is that your life is a mist that's about to blow away. You need to completely rethink how you contemplate life.

Verse 15, he brings out again this idea of humility instead of pride. He says, verse 15, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.' But as it is, you boast in your arrogance." You see, he's addressing that pride and the lack of humility and he says, "all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." James has told us to react in humility to life and to trials instead of with this proud arrogant spirit.

So there's this practical dimension of behavior that James addresses as he calls us to righteous works but don't miss the fact that in a way that parallels what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, James is addressing your heart in what happens. Pride versus humility. Trust versus doubt and complaints. This is a letter that addresses us at the deepest level of our hearts.

Now we move into chapter 5. Point 7, in a way come to the climax of the letter that has a few implications afterwards, but I love point 7 and what James says here because he ties it all together for us when he says rely on Christ instead of your resources. Rely on Christ instead of your resources. James counsels his readers not to trust in their worldly resources or their wealth in their adversity.

Look at chapter 5, verse 1. He says, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten." What you are relying on in your trials have proven to be of no value and consequence. Look, when a wealthy person suddenly, unexpectedly, not trusting Christ, loses a loved one, at their funeral there is no comfort in the thickness of their wallet, is there? It's exposed for the empty scam that it is.

Verse 3, "Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you." He goes to these wealthy people, even perhaps wealthy people within the church, and he speaks so directly to them. He says, "Your life is marked by the fact that you live for this earthly stuff. It's shown in your relationships. It's shown how you mistreat those who depend upon you. It is shown in your arrogant attitude toward life and I'm here to tell you," he says, "your resources mean nothing in what is ultimately at stake. There is no value to your wealth at all. Your focus is completely wrong."

So in the midst of everything that he says and all of this ties in together now, whether you today, beloved, are facing difficult people or circumstances, I ask the question again: what do you do when you encounter various trials? It can't be about wealth. It can't be about feeding the complaining spirit. It can't be about allowing conflict to dominate your life because you're unhappy inside. It can't be about that. So then, what do you do? What's the title of today's message? Be patient until the Lord comes.

Look at James 5:7, "Therefore," he's said all that he has to say through the first 4 ½ chapters and now he's bringing it to a point of clarity, precision and decision. What will you do in light of all that he has said? James says here's what you are to do, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near." Beloved, for all of the practical nature of James's instruction to us, his answer for how you sustain yourself when you encounter various trials is profoundly theological. He reminds you that the Lord is coming again. He says that what life is ultimately about is outside the realm of time as we know it. He says, "Beloved, remember that the Lord is coming again and when He comes, He'll be bearing the blessing of his kingdom for His people, and you as one who has trusted in Christ, that is your destination. This is the outcome of everything and all of your trials, is that it culminates in the return of the Lord bearing the blessings of His kingdom for His kingdom citizens."

And he says, "Remember that, beloved, and be patient therefore," and he uses this humble illustration of a farmer. What does a farmer do? He plants. He sows the seed. He understands there's going to be a period of delay from the work that he does now to enjoying the fruit of the harvest. James is not teaching agriculture here, is he? He's teaching us a principle of spiritual life, to understand that the investment you make in obedience to his instruction in this letter is planting the seeds for a fruitful return of the Lord and to be patient and to look for that, so that, beloved, you do not waver in faith but rather you persevere even when it is hard.

Beloved fellow Christian, hear me, hear God's word: all be well for you in the end. It has to be because Christ is coming to establish his kingdom and so what's happening here at a most profound level is this, undergirding everything that James has said, remember he opened up saying, "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. Let endurance have its perfect result." Well, what's that result in this life? He's saying that your trials are designed – oh, we're gonna sum it all up now – your trials are designed to pivot your focus away from this world and away from the circumstances of life to what the whole goal of your salvation was, the return of the Lord when he comes to receive you to himself as we read at the very beginning of the service in John 14. "If I go away, I'm gonna prepare a place for you, and if I go away and I prepare that place, I'm gonna come again." And in that, beloved, and in that certainty you find your rest, in that certainty you find your joy and you say, "This whole series of circumstances is ultimately in a way," I'm not being Christian Science here on you, but in terms of the ultimate outcome, "this is a passing vapor of a mist. Even if it's difficult, I can live with this because I know the outcome is that the Lord is coming and that fills my heart with joy. I'm gonna see the face of the one who died for my sins. I'm gonna see Him in His glory. I'm gonna be made like Him," 1 John 3:2, "when I do. And He saved me for that purpose and, oh, does that make my heart rejoice! That makes me so happy, so glad to remember that, that I have a sure treasure that transcends everything that would otherwise drag me down."

And he illustrates with an Old Testament example, verse 10, he says, "As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job," watch this, "and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." Job lost it all, lost his health, lost his wealth, lost his family, suffered greatly under the affliction of judgmental friends. But what was the outcome? The Lord restored him. The Lord blessed him. He was greater at the end than he was at the beginning. James is telling you, "You think about your trials that way." Job endured and he was blessed in an earthly sense. James says, "You endure, you're going to be blessed in a heavenly kingdom sense that transcends even what Job is." Why do we know that's true? Why do we know that that's the outcome? Because the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful and his character and his revealed intention to come again gives you all the motivation you need to patiently endure whenever trials come your way. This is the answer to it all, beloved. The outcome of the Lord's dealing when you receive that crown of life that James referred to in James 1:12, he's come full circle, the outcome of that crown of life will be full of compassion and mercy.

So I say this to encourage and help those of you that are especially under the weight of heart-wrenching, soul-troubling times right now and it seems like you're clinging to Christ by the tips of your fingernails in all of this, beloved, I want to encourage you the Lord has not lost sight of you, the Lord has not forgotten you. Endure, be patient in the midst of it because what God has planned for you will be shown to be full of compassion and mercy in a way that transcends even the riches that were given to Job. It's worth it to trust him. You will not be disappointed. Everyone who believes in him will not be disappointed.

Point eight, in light of that James closes where he began, he began in verse 5 of chapter 1 saying, "Let them ask of God." He comes back full circle, verse 8, he says, "Request help from God instead of bearing it alone." Verse 13, "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises." And he goes on and he talks about those that are sick and confessing sins, and it gives us the hope that our prayers are not meaningless, that there's value and effectiveness in our prayers. In verse 17 he says, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." Beloved, understand that the prayer comes full circle and once you've understood this, once your care is directed toward the return of Christ, he says once that's settled in your mind, verse 19 go and minister this to others, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

So beloved, when you encounter various trials, be patient until the Lord comes. Not fear but trust in Christ's word and promise. Not complaints but prayer. Not panic but patience. That kind of faith will produce the joy in the midst of your trials, in the midst of the storms of life. Will you turn your heart to Christ and respond in this way?

Let's pray.

Father, many here are suffering. We ask You to strengthen their faith in their trials that they may be patient until the Lord comes. Others are cold and dead in their sins, may Your Spirit impart a new heart to them that they might trust in Christ and be saved. O God, search us all to the recesses of our heart, cleanse us from our sins as we confess them even now before You, and lead us in that path of endurance that leads to that blessed outcome when we see our Savior face to face, when our wonderful Lord comes again. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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