

Sustaining Words to the Weary

James 5:7-9

In our message last week from **James 5:1-6**, James gave some sharp words to the wealthy. In **verse 1** we considered the peril of the wicked rich.

In **verses 2-6** we discussed the profiteering of the wicked rich, or how it was they became rich.

We ended the message last week with some thoughts about how to avoid the problems of the wicked rich.

In our passage today, there are no fewer than five different topics we could focus on.

We could consider what it is to be patient.

We could talk about the Lord's coming.

We could ponder the need to stand firm.

There is an admonition not to grumble about others. Or the coming Judge and judgment.

While each could be a stand-alone message, I'm choosing to address each of them today. With your Bibles opened to **James 5:7-9**, we will consider from this passage his sustaining words to the weary.

There are so many things that can cause us to be weary, things like job responsibilities; home life that includes fixing meals, doing dishes, tackling the mountain of laundry, the never-ending shuffle of taking kids from this activity to that appointment; juggling bills. Robyn and I are grateful that David drives now so we don't have to carpool and adjust schedules to accommodate after school events, not that we minded, but it is a relief to have that off our plate. Now we have a new concern because he is driving.

With all the stuff going on, we are weary. Quite frankly there are days we want the world to stop and let us off. We are overcome and overwhelmed by the stuff in life, and James offers some words of encouragement and hope. It's hope found in the person of Jesus Christ and in His appearing. Once again James turns his attention to believers, those he identifies as **"brothers"**. These verses are a call to be patient in suffering. The word **"then"** in the NIV and **"therefore"** in the KJV is a link to the

preceding verses where James challenged the wealthy. These believers were weary from the oppression. When we are weary of the struggle, it can be easy to throw your hands up and wonder what's the use when it seems like the wicked rich always get their way at our expense. Why try? If you are weary today or any day, James offers words of hope for you. Something that's going on has you plodding along through each day, hoping you can make it through the day.

I recently found a cartoon with an employee slumped back in her chair. She says "if I can only make it to Friday." The caption at the bottom read "it's good to have a career goal."

That may be how you feel right now – if I can just make it one more day. Maybe you're singing along with the musical Annie "The sun will come out tomorrow." But here you are in the middle of today and tomorrow doesn't seem to offer much hope when you need it right now. James offers hope in these verses for today and every day you feel overwhelmed with weariness.

In **verse 7** he tells believers to be composed.

In **verse 8** he tells believers to be courageous.

In **verse 9** he tells believers to be courteous.

I. BELIEVERS ARE TO BE COMPOSED – v. 7

James begins with an exhortation to believers.

A. The Exhortation For Believers To Be Patient

James is giving a command. It's not a suggestion. It's not when you feel like it. It's not only under certain circumstances. Be patient and do it now. Patience will guide the believer for the rest of **chapter 5**. James helps us understand how we can do right when we have been treated so wrong.

Patience comes from a word that means to wait in tranquility. In the Greek it's made up of two words: macro, which means long and thumos, which means temper. Put together patience means to be long-tempered. Now that doesn't mean that our temper is long, but instead to keep our temper in check. Long-suffering is another word that is often used. Think

of it as having a long fuse. We might tell someone not to blow their top or to keep their cool. Walvoord and Zuck suggest that we set the timer of our temper for a long run, to have a long fuse.

Greek scholar A.T. Robertson puts it this way: “catch your wind for a long race.”

James is saying we shouldn't have a short fuse, to let out our anger at the snap of a finger or as soon as something bad happens to us. When we've been waiting in traffic because of road construction and someone blows by to get ahead of the rest of us who have been sitting there waiting our turn. When the kids just dumped out all their toys after we spent all day picking them up. When our boss lashes out at us for not getting something done, even though we have legitimate reasons for the delay that were out of our control. There are many reasons why we might blow our cool. In the context James adds one more – when the rich are oppressing us. In each case the call is to be patient, to suffer long, to keep our cool in such circumstances.

I started playing basketball in 7th grade. During one practice the coach lined us up into three lines and told us to do the three-man weave. It's a passing drill. He blew the whistle to begin. It was a comedy of errors. For the drill to work right, the middle player starts out with the ball. Let's say he throws it to the player on his right. He then follows by going behind the player he just threw the ball to. The player on the left then runs to the middle to have the ball passed to him. The player on the right passes the ball and then follows by running behind that player. The player who just received the ball then passes to the player who started with the ball. You do that all that way down the court.

If you have never played basketball, you are sitting there dazed and confused. So were most of us in 7th grade. You need to understand that in our school we had two weeks of basketball in 6th grade. We knew about dribbling and shooting, but nothing about the three-man weave. Our coach had a serious lack of patience that day as He threw the ball against the wall and stormed off into the locker room.

Flip back to **James 1** and look again at **verses 2-4**. “**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you fall into various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, so that you may be perfect and entire (complete) wanting or lacking nothing.**”

James says that God allows trials to test our faith and develop our patience. For some reason God allowed the testing of their faith through the oppression by the rich. He allowed it in order to develop their patience and bring about His perfect work in them and to perfect them or bring them into His likeness in the process.

Which of these three statements is correct?

In **SOME** things God works for the good

In **CERTAIN** things God works for the good

In **ALL** things God works for the good

Paul says “**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.**” (Romans 8:28)

Are you weary today as you face some trial in your life where you are close to losing your cool? James says we need to be patient. But here's the thing, and maybe you already know this, you can't do it alone, you can't be patient in your own power. Sure, there are those who tell you to count to 10 or 100 or a thousand. Others will say you should just leave the room and don't come back till you've cooled down.

Here's the key, real patience, lasting patience requires submission to God. We looked at that back in **4:7** where we are told to “**submit to God**”. Paul said that patience is among the fruit that the Holy Spirit wants to develop in us (**Galatians 5:22-23**). This kind of patience only comes from God. It is divinely produced fruit.

Here's my personal opinion for what it's worth. I think that in order to have this kind of patience you first need to allow the Holy Spirit to develop love, joy and peace in your life. I don't think you have God-given patience without first having a dose of

God-given love, God-given peace, and God-given joy. All that comes from submitting to the work of God's Spirit.

When we put **James 5:7** and **Romans 8:28** together the key to growing in patience is in loving God. Pastor Jim said something of importance last week. He said I don't want the Lord to return and find me being upset with someone else. The gist of it is that we shouldn't want the Lord to return and find us impatient, especially when He has given us His Spirit to overcome it.

Ephesians 4:2 **"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another."**

Colossians 3:12 says we are to clothe ourselves with patience.

Let me just say one more thing about patience. This will help when we may feel the urge to be impatient. Never forget how incredibly patient the Lord has been with us.

II Peter 3:15 **"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation."** Early in **verses 9** he stated that God isn't willing that any should perish but all come to repentance. His patience with you has led to your salvation. His patience with you has brought repentance and spiritual growth.

We are to be patient and Paul tells us in **Romans 12:12** to be patient in affliction. When we are weary of the daily struggles at the hands of others and it's a challenge to be patient be strengthened by this: **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."** **Hebrews 12:2-3**

To illustrate the kind of patience that is required, James gives an example for believers to be patient.

B. The Example For Believers To Be Patient

There are a lot of lessons to be learned from agriculture and James, like Paul, gives his audience

a visual reminder of what patience looks like. The farmer is a lesson in patience. He depends on the fall and spring rains for growing and harvesting his crops. Farming requires that you wait months for the seed to germinate and produce a plant, for that plant to grow and produce whatever was planted, and to wait for the crop to ripen before picking. Patience is the watchword for the farmer.

It would be foolish to think they should expect to find something to harvest the day after it was planted. It takes time. In just the same way, God is producing patience in us through the hardships we are enduring for the purpose of growing our faith and making us like Him.

Patience means we let God work His plan and allow Him to handle the situation in His way and in His time just like the farmer must wait for his crops. Farming is an apt illustration for us to consider how God grows His patience in us. **But it is one thing to learn patience and to wait patiently, but for how long?** We're like the kids in the back seat of the car on a trip asking how long it is before we get there. **What helps us in the waiting?** James provides the expectation for how long we should be patient.

C. The Expectation For Believers To Be Patient

"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming."

But we don't know how long that will be. The waiting would be so much easier if we knew the when, but then it wouldn't be faith. James is offering hope for the weary who are waiting for the Lord's return. It's hope that it may be today and because we are assured of His promised return hope gives us the patience to wait expectantly, eagerly, cheerfully for the long haul.

Jesus is coming to earth again –
What if it were today?
Coming in power and love to reign –
What if it were today?

Faithful and true would He find us here
If He should come today?
Watching in gladness and not in fear,

If He should come today?
 Signs of His coming multiply,
 Morning light breaks in eastern sky;
 Watch, for the time is drawing nigh –
 What if it were today?

This promise is hope to the believer, to each one going through some difficulty. Know that the trial you are going through is just temporary and that His return is at any moment. **What if it were today?**

II Corinthians 4:16-18

I Peter 1:6-9

I Peter 5:10

Knowing that the Lord is going to return should encourage us to hang in there, to be patient in our hardships and persecutions. The return of the Lord should give the believer hope. The word James uses is the most common word for the Lord's coming again. We refer to it as the 2nd coming because He already came once at the incarnation, the time we celebrate His birth. The word means more than just coming, it includes the idea of presence. The best English word we can use is arrival. Our hope is in the arrival of Christ. The truth of His return is seen in over 500 verses in the Bible. Every believer is to live with that hope or certainty of His return and to be patient until He does.

I Thessalonians 4:16 “**For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.**”

II Timothy 4:8 encourages us to long for His appearing.

John says that if we have the hope of His appearing, we should purify ourselves (**I John 3:2-3**).

The expectation for the believer is the Lord's return. If that is our hope, then be patient when suffering under the hands of the wicked rich. **In your trials, are you looking forward to the Lord coming again?** Believers are to be composed. Believers are to be courageous.

II. BELIEVERS ARE TO BE COURAGEOUS

– v. 8

Verse 8 begins by giving believers two instructions and again these are commands, things we should be doing every day, in every trial or life event that comes along.

A. The Instructions To Believers – v. 8a

1. Be patient

That should be fresh in our minds. Be long-tempered or long-fused.

2. Stand firm

I like the KJV which says to “**establish your hearts**”. **Proverbs 4:23** tells us to keep our heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. In other words, if we store up good things in the heart, then good words and deeds will come forth.

The word “**establish**” or “**stand firm**” means to support, fix firmly in place so that it is immovable, to be resolute, to have firm courage and to have an attitude of commitment and conviction. It comes from a root word that means to cause to stand or to prop up. It's used in **Luke 9:51** speaking of Jesus who resolutely set Himself to go to Jerusalem where He would be betrayed and crucified.

Peter says the same thing in regard to our need to stand firm against our enemy, the devil.

I Peter 5:8-10 (*10)

Our life is one battle after another, with oppression that comes from forces we can see and forces we can't see. We need to be prepared and patient in the battle. This steadfast spirit or resolute heart trusts God to help us in times of trial, when we may want to give in or give up.

Isaiah 26:3-4 puts it this way:

The Amplified: "You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], Because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation]."

Paul also instructs the believer to stand firm against the enemy, but then gives us the means by which

we are able to stand. God has given us His armor for the battles we face.

Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul also offered this prayer for believers.

Ephesians 3:14-21

Folks, the Lord knows what you are going through. He knows the trials and persecutions and oppression. He hasn't abandoned you or jumped ship. We are to be patient, stand firm. Again, James reminds us of the Lord's return. He not only gives the believers instructions, he reminds them of the imminency of the Lord's return for the believers.

B. The Imminency For Believers – v. 8b

In **verse 7**, James tells us to be patient for the Lord's coming. It's going to happen, just wait for it, look for it. In **verse 8**, he tells us to be patient and stand firm because the Lord's return is near, not in terms of location or proximity, but in terms of time.

We are living with the anticipation, the expectation of the Lord's return at any time. In His instructions regarding His return, the Lord gave this advice that we would do well to heed: **Matthew 24:42**

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day the Lord will come.”

James wrote **verses 7 and 8** to bring comfort and encouragement to those who were feeling discouraged by their difficult circumstances. He wanted to bolster their spirits by telling them to be patient and stand firm because the Lord's return could be at any time. He promised it, so expect it, and be prepared for it. Live as if it might be today.

John MacArthur gives these encouraging words: **“James urges those about to collapse under the weight of persecution to prop themselves up with the hope of the Savior's return.”**

Most nights Robyn will send me a quick text message telling me she is on her way home. When she does that, I know I have about 15 minutes before she arrives. I look forward to seeing her walk in the door. On the nights she forgets and 6:00 turns

into 6:30 or 7:00, I get concerned, so I call her. I want to know where she is and if she is okay.

The Lord said He will return. He's given us a text message in the Bible that He will be coming at any time. We don't know the exact day or time, but we have that promise, which gives us hope. We don't need to wonder if He changed His mind. We don't need to worry that something has happened to Him. He's given us His word. All we need to do is keep watching and keep living as if it was going to be right now.

Are you preparing for His return by striving to live a godly life, patient in your trials?

Are you prepared for His return by knowing Christ as your Savior? After He returns, there is no second chance.

James gives one more command in **verse 9**. While the verse is in the negative, I want to make it positive. Believers are to be courteous.

III. BELIEVERS ARE TO BE COURTEOUS – v. 9

First, he gives advice to believers. Strap yourself in because it's accusatory.

A. The Advice To Believers – v. 9a

We could stop with the first two words and have quite a candid discussion **“don't complain”**, but James says **“don't complain against each other”**. It can be translated don't grudge or don't murmur. It means to express displeasure or to find fault or make an accusation. The word murmur means to make a low, indistinct, continuous sound like muttering under your breath. It implies a flow of words uttered in an indistinct tone that expresses dissatisfaction about something or someone.

In this case, the admonishment of James is to believers. Even though they were experiencing the pain of being taken advantage of by the rich, they were taking their frustration and anger out on one another. We're having a bad day at work and we come home and lash out on our family. The admonition here isn't that these believers shouldn't

start complaining, but instead they should stop murmuring because some already were.

How does complaining against others demonstrate the love of Christ in our life?

How does complaining against others demonstrate patience with them?

How does complaining against others express forgiveness?

How does complaining against others exhibit joy or peace or kindness or meekness?

How does complaining against others provide a witness that we are a disciple of Christ?

The insinuation from James is to stop complaining.

Not only does James give believers sound advice, he also indicates that if complaining continues, action would be taken against them.

B. The Action Against Believers – v. 9b

J. Vernon McGee writes “It should be very embarrassing if the Lord should come while we are sitting in judgment of someone else. You would suddenly find yourself in His presence with Him judging you.”

That’s not how I want to be found when the Lord returns. I want to hear His well done good and faithful servant. I want to run the race of the Christian life with the best of my ability. I want to be found faithful and striving to keep myself right with God and others when the Lord returns. Otherwise, James says we will experience the Lord’s judgement. We won’t lose our salvation, but there will be other losses.

John Phillips suggests that “our reactions to wrongs can be as bad as the wrongs inflicted on us.”

Instead of complaining against other believers, it’s a call to be courteous to them, knowing that if we do complain about fellow Christians, the action taken against us will be our judgment. James then closes the verse revealing the authority over the believer.

C. The Authority Over Believers – v. 9c

Once again, we see the imminency of the Lord’s

return. The Judge is waiting at the door. The tense in the Greek is that He is standing there right now, poised to walk through the door at any time. Knowing that the great Judge is ready to enter is meant to keep believers from murmuring against one another.

When Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He was seated next to the Father. Now He is standing waiting to bring judgment.

Are you ready for His return?

If you are a believer, are you patiently but eagerly watching and waiting for His return?

If you are not a believer, if you have never acknowledged that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and repented of your sin and placed your faith in Christ, then today is a day to do that so that when the Judge comes, you will be ready to hear Him say this day you will be with Me in paradise.

The judgment of God is coming, are you ready?

II Peter 3:3-15a