

Intro: Garrison. Elder Candidate. **Pray.**

Chick-fil-a. Have you ever spent any time pondering the evolution of Chick Fil A's drive-thrus? Got it. Well in the beginning, and by beginning I mean 10-15 years ago or so, Chick Fila A had one drive thru line. You'd order at the microphone menu area, wait in line, pull up to the first window to pay and then get your food at the second. Btw this isn't unique to just Chick Fil A, it just proves a point. Well eventually, that system wasn't cutting it anymore. So we got rid of the first window to pay. Who needs 2? But that wasn't enough. So good spots like Chick fil a would send out a worker or two to take the orders at rush hour. Great idea. Well eventually that wouldn't cut it either, so they had to open up a second drive thru lane. That surely would be enough! No. It wasn't. So they added a mobile order option. To where you just drive up and park and let the nice Chick fil a worker come out and hand you food. But that wouldn't cut it either. Because here comes doordash!

Why did all of this change the way it did? **Impatience.** Because people want it now. Now you could interpret this in two ways: 1. We have an internal patience problem. 2. Chick fil a is forming us to be impatient people under the guise of feeding us the Lord's chicken. Think about that next time they tell you 'my pleasure'. No, it's number 1. **We have a patience problem.** That's being worsened by number 2.

If Chick fil A doesn't convince you. What about this: How many of you this month have been downloading a document, a picture, something, and then just gave up because it wasn't moving fast enough? Think of how crazy that is. "Oh, man. I've been waiting for like 18 seconds. Never mind. I have no time for this." Right? It's crazy. We're perpetually impatient. "This isn't fast enough. This isn't happening quickly enough. This is frustrating me." Have you ever yelled at a screen? This is a safe place. Be honest.

It can come off as quirky or even funny because of how universal this is. But the problem is it's sinful. Impatience creates in us this posture of, give me what I want or need now! Our impatience is a problem that affects so many areas of our lives. Today - James is going to address how our impatience impacts our ability to suffer well.

When suffering comes, when suffering hits, that's when the rubber actually hits the road. Because in our impatience, we don't do well in suffering. Biblically, you will have trials. You will suffer. It's not an if. It's a when. We talked about this back in James 1, our first sermon in the series. We said that when trials and suffering come, you've got two options. You can try to make it on your own, or you can mature. As a Christian, your aim is to endure through trials well. To suffer well.

Tonight's text says in order to do that, we need one really important thing.

To suffer well, you have to be patient. When you suffer, when brokenness in your life is very real, when things aren't going your way, when you're in the middle of a trial. Be patient. Suffering reveals whether we have dead or living faith. Here's how:

Dead Faith makes it through suffering.

BUT:

Living Faith suffers patiently.

James gives us a better way. To suffer patiently. That when suffering comes, we would stay rooted in the Gospel so that our suffering transforms us. In order to do that, he's going to give us 3 examples that we'll parse through.

Let's hop in:

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

1. The patience of the farmer.

If you were to read through the New Testament, pretty quickly into the life and teachings of Jesus you'd start to notice a pattern where the Kingdom of God and Farming are often tied together. We get analogies like:

- The strength of your faith being like a mustard seed.
- The Word of God being sowed, or planted, like seed.
- The end of times being the harvest.
- Jesus being the true vine. And that if we remain in Him we'll bear fruit.
- The kingdom of God itself is like a seed that sprouts and the farmer doesn't know when or how.

Farming and the Kingdom of God are tied together. A huge reason they're tied together is because patience is required for both. You don't know how or when or why the Kingdom of Jesus sprouts up over here, but not there. It's unexpected. It requires waiting. And if you want to see it yourself, you have to have patience.

You have to have patience....James picks up once again on his half-brother Jesus' teachings and says that in our suffering there's a patient waiting as well.

Because here's what happens. Here's the question of a farmer who's waiting for the fruit of the earth - "when will the harvest come?" So like the farmer, we ask:

Question: When will the fruit come?

When we are in the middle of suffering, don't we find ourselves asking the same question? When will the harvest come? When will the fruit come? When will this finish? I'm Christian enough to know God's trying to teach me a lesson in suffering, I get that. When will I learn the lesson so I can move on.

And here's the temptation.

Temptation: We rush ahead of God.

This is the temptation when we're waiting. We rush. Whatever it is. Depression. Anxiety. Painful circumstances. Financial hardship. We can't see the end. Like you're wondering if, when, how this is going to end and can't see it. We ask the questions. Will it be worth it? Will I be okay? Will there be any fruit from this?

So we rush. Plenty of ways we do it. The solution is peace and relief so I go get it how I want.

- We start ignoring our pain, ignoring our hurt, just start saying "it's ok" to try to will our emotions passed it.
- We rush through the conflict. We just try to end the argument, get it over with, so we don't have to sit in the relational tension anymore.
- We pray - "Lord, I get it! I need to grow in humility. Lesson learned. Can we be done now?"

We don't trust the timing of the work God is doing in us.

When we rush, we're just trying to make it. And that's how dead faith endures suffering.

James corrects them with a lesson:

Lesson: The coming of the Lord is at hand.

James corrects them and us by pointing to the coming of Jesus. It's at the core of how we can patiently suffer. He says remember, God is coming back to right all wrongs.

. We don't need to rush anything because we're already moving towards the solution. Jesus is coming back.

- In the depression and anxiety that's been there for years and just isn't getting better regardless of how much you talk about it, regardless of prescription. Jesus will wipe away every tear.
- When tragedy comes out of nowhere. Death. Disability. Miscarriages. Random diagnosis that changes your life. There will be a day when all of that is a distant memory of the past. Where mourning and crying will have passed away.

So, James says, when it comes to the Lord's coming and the suffering in your life, like a farmer, trust God with what you cannot control while honoring God with what you can control.

First example: the farmer. In suffering, be patient. Don't rush, remember the Lord is coming. Let's look back for our next one:

9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.

2. The patience of the prophets.

Now in order to understand this example, you've got to know a little bit about the prophets.

Essentially the pattern of the OT is that God would send the prophets to teach and rebuke the people of Israel. So the pattern of the OT is that God is faithful to Israel and they just over and over and over again fail. God sends the prophet to rebuke them.

Now this happens a lot and it would be almost impossible to go through all of this tonight. We get a great summary of this in Hebrews 11. So put a finger on James and flip over Hebrews 11.

32 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of ¹Gideon, ²Barak, ³Samson, ⁴Jephthah, of ⁵David and ⁶Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, ⁵became mighty in war, ⁶put foreign armies to flight. 35 ⁷Women received back their dead by resurrection.

James references some of the most famous and faithful figures of the whole Bible and says, consider how we think of them. They're blessed. They were steadfast and faithful. I mean just look at what happened in their life!

Look at the miracles. They enforced justice. Obtained promises. The kingdom of God was showing up. We would totally consider them blessed. Surely it would be very easy to be patient and wait on the Lord if you've experienced what they experienced. But look at this other category:

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even ¹chains and imprisonment. 37 ²They were stoned, they were sawn in two, ³they were killed with the sword. ⁴They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—⁵wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

We might say, 'hmm not so blessed huh? This isn't the example I'd like to be going after for suffering patiently.'

The truth is, it almost always goes badly for the prophet. The prophets are treated terribly. They are persecuted, rejected and sometimes even killed. The question you find mistreated, persecuted, abused prophets asking often in the Old Testament is this -

Question: When will God avenge me?

Don't we ask the same question in our suffering?

When will God avenge me? I don't deserve this. I was wronged. I was mistreated. I'm suffering for no reason. It's their fault. It's their doing. When is God going to take my side and fix this and them? When is He going to vindicate me? Avenge me? Which takes us right into the temptation:

Temptation: To grumble and complain.

So we try to share the Gospel, resolve a conflict, push into someone's blind spot. And it goes badly. They respond poorly, push us away. You ever have this happen? The temptation is that we end up complaining and grumbling about the people. "I can't believe how they responded. They're so immature. Like how can they not see those blind spots." It's so frustrating and hurtful, but here's the issue:

Hurt that is not transformed is transferred.

SO we get hurt, and if we don't let the Lord deal with our hurt, whether just or unjust, we then turn around and transfer it onto someone else or back onto the person that hurt us. We throw in the towel on God's redemptive work in that person's life, in our relationship.

There will be times when you say kind, true, and hard things to a fellow believer and it blows up in your face. There will be times when you're building relationships with non believers and they find out you're a Christian and they won't want anything to do with you anymore. ...But won't God reconcile and save??... yes of course. But not always. And definitely not according to your plans. James shows us how you can actually land there as a Christian:

Lesson: God is a good judge.

We talked about this a couple weeks ago, judgment is coming, so don't judge. Now, the coming of Jesus, the coming of judgment can seem like a really scary thing. But it's actually a really good thing and the reminder of God being the judge is the way that God's people have dealt with suffering at the hands of others forever.

Take Ps 43 as a beautiful example of a prayer to hold onto. King David is on the run for his life as his own son is unjustly trying to kill him and take his kingdom. Look at what he prays.:

Psalm 43. *Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!*

David's circumstances are bad. He takes all that to God. He recognizes His need for God to take some action to make that happen. He needs to be defended from his enemies. But he also needs God to sustain him during that time in his brief exile with light and truth.

Why? Why does he do that? Because He sees that God is the judge and He's good.

God is the one in control. God is the one that judges. We are not.

When you experience relational fallout, when there's barely a resolution or none at all: Remember God's the judge. You start to feel crazy in this stuff. You don't need to justify or avenge yourself, you don't need to keep yourself up all night wondering what you missed or what you could have said differently. There's space for that, but at some point, all you can do is remember that God is good. He is the judge. We are not.

1. Patience of the farmer.
2. Patience of the prophets.

Lets hop back for our 3rd.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, How the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

3. The patience of Job.

Here's what a little of what happens in the book of Job. Keep in mind that James is trying to encourage people with the book of Job, Job as a book of encouragement. Nice. The Bible tells us that God is on his throne, and the angels are presenting themselves to God. The Accuser walks in. The Devil is the Accuser. He walks in, and God asks the Accuser what he has been up to. The devil essentially asks and gets permission from God to inflict suffering on Job. Job is described as a righteous man, upright in God's eyes, and the devil is like, we'll see.

He loses his wealth, kids, he ends up losing his health. Then for 30 odd chapters we get Job sitting with his 3 friends while they say all of the reasons that this is happening, which they're all bad reasons.

A huge piece of Job is to show us that sometimes suffering is inexplicable to us. We just don't know the answers. And in the midst of this type of suffering, Job is tempted to Ask this:

Question: Why is this happening to me?

Once again, don't we do the same thing? Isn't that our question when the inexplicable happens? When you don't get the result you wanted. When the thing you prayed for that seems so good just feels like it's been taken away. This shouldn't be happening. God's supposed to be for my good. I don't deserve this. When you're putting in all the work and it doesn't feel like God's showing up like He's supposed to. Here's the temptation:

Temptation: God isn't present or good.

This is the all encompassing emotional response to suffering. Why is this happening? I thought God was for my good? I know I don't do everything perfectly but I'm trying. If this is happening, then God cannot be good or present. He is against me.

Is this your response to suffering and trial? That God's abandoned you? That He isn't good or kind to you? That all your effort in following Jesus is for nothing?

I think this exposes a deep heart issue in us.

We all experience the temptation to believe if I do the right thing, things will go well for me. That's a generally true thing for most Americans. I might argue that it's even more appealing and sneakier for Christians. Because we're God's people right? But even more than that, if I'm trying my best to live as a faithful, mature Christian; not perfectly, but progress, that should mean that things go well.

It's sneaky because it's a half truth. Certainly some things in your life will improve as you grow and mature in Christ. I can certainly testify that in my sanctification things like shame, lust, anxiety have become smaller and smaller parts of my life and the result is really nice. My marriage, many of my friendships are way healthier than they would've been without Christ. But that doesn't mean everything will work that way.

And it's extremely dangerous when that belief influences how we speak and relate to God.

There will be issues and circumstances in your life that happen and we may never know why they happened. But it isn't because God doesn't love you or care. It isn't because God isn't good or present.

Which is exactly why James is referencing Job. James references one of the heaviest books in the Bible:

Because the believers in James knew the last five chapters of Job. They knew God meets Job in this brokenness. He heals Job. He restores to Job all that has been taken, and we see the compassion and love of God made manifest in difficult days and moronic friends that are present in Job's life.

But even that's not the point of the book of Job. At the end of the book, 42 chapters, after everything Job goes through, Job responds by saying this:

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; This ties right back to verse 11.

Lesson: God has purposes, compassion and mercy.

The point of Job isn't that you're going to get everything back that you've lost in this lifetime. It's not to think that we'll get all the answers. It's this. The Lord's purpose. He wants to use our suffering to bring us closer to Him! That ultimately, somehow, in a way that we'll never be able to fully understand this side of heaven, God is using all of the bad for His purposes.

No Graven Image. Elisabeth Elliot was an author and missionary. We've talked about her a few times. She wrote a novel based on real missionary experiences called *No Graven Image*. The novel tells of a young woman who's been called to minister to an Indian tribe that has no Bible yet translated to their language. She prays and prays and prays for how she'll actually be able to reach this Indian tribe. She knows and is confident that God wants her to help translate these Bibles. She's been called to it. Finally, she meets a man named Pedro. Pedro is literally the only man in the world that is a Christian, knows Spanish (the language of the Bibles they had) and the language of these Indians. The young missionary woman sees that God is finally going to move! That He's going to save. And it's all because of her meeting Pedro. One morning she finds that Pedro has an infection in his leg that's fairly serious. She quickly gives him penicillin for treatment. But he has an allergic reaction and he begins to die. As she stands beside she prays. God heal him. You can heal him. But he dies. She prays God, what about your plan? You gave me Pedro to save the Indians. What about his family? God what are you doing? As she stands at the funeral she doubts. This is a quote: "And God? What of Him? "I am with thee" He had said. With me in this? He had allowed Pedro to die, or— and I could not then nor can I today deny the possibility— He had allowed me to destroy him. And does He now, I asked myself there at the graveside, ask me to worship Him?" Isn't that us? The key line on the last page is a quote I cannot get over. She lands. **"God, if He was merely my accomplice, had betrayed me. If, on the other hand, He was my God, He had freed me."**

The god that only exists to give you all the answers, support your plans, and bless what you want is not a real god. That's an accomplice. And some of us don't realize that we've been relating to God not like the God of the universe but like our business partner.

And when suffering comes our god isn't holding up his end of the arrangement!

The God who's plans always look exactly like your plans will surely disappoint. That God will betray you, because He's just your accomplice. He'll betray you because He's not real.

But the God of the Bible, He wants to free us in our suffering. He wants us to trust Him enough, to let go of control, to follow Him in hostility, and to worship Him when we have no answers. Seems impossible. But not with God.

He wants to transform your suffering, the worst things that happen, the small trials and big, to do something in your heart. So that you too can respond just like Job. *but now my eye sees you;*

Killer Conclusion: Let me end here. James calls us to imitate the farmer, the prophet and Job. That in our suffering we'd remember God, that He is faithful and coming for us. That we'd remember God is the good judge when we're treated poorly. And that we'd remember God's purposes, compassion and mercy when we experience inexplicable suffering.

Those are great examples to follow, great tips on how to endure suffering, but on our own, we won't be able to do them. Our ability to imitate godliness will fall short every time. We need the perfect example, Jesus.

Jesus didn't rush God in His own suffering, but waited perfectly. He remembered that God is the good judge when He was scoffed at, betrayed and killed. He submitted to the Father in His death, instead of grumbling or complaining. On the cross Jesus experienced the most egregious and undeserved trial, and He went willingly. He did it so that all who trust in Him would get His perfect record.

But even more than that, He not only gives us His record and example, but Himself. That's what we need in suffering. We need Him. We are not just patient, we're patient with Christ. We wait with Him. We establish our hearts with Him. He is there in the waiting, in the patience (and in the lack thereof).

When you're wondering where the fruit is, when He'll vindicate you and if He abandoned you, remember that He's with you. There's nothing, no question, no hurt, no circumstance that can separate us from Him.

Communion.

Pray