YOU CAN PRACTICE PATIENCE―RIGHT NOW!

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INTRODUCTION

ATTENTION-GETTER: Q: What do you call a happy cowboy?

A: Jolly Rancher

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Bumper Stickers for the Educated

* I almost had a psychic girlfriend but she left me before we met.
* I love defenseless animals, especially in good gravy.
* Mind Like A Steel Trap - Rusty And Illegal In 37 States
* Support bacteria – they're the only culture some people have.
* Televangelists: The Pro Wrestlers of religion.
* When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

SCRIPTURE: James 5:7-12 NIV: *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!*

*Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

*Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned*.

1. I need patience — and I need it RIGHT NOW!!!
   1. Patience is a rare commodity in technological times. In our western world today we are increasingly accustomed to instant responses to almost every situation. We think quick is better, because many times it is.
   2. After all there are many time wasters in our society today, and we really don’t like to wait. The doctor’s office is one of my stress factors. I don’t know why I should be upset, after all, they have been honest with me — they labeled it the waiting room. Why should I be surprised that I have to wait?
   3. The restaurant is another place that you have to wait. There are at least six waits in a restaurant. First, you wait to get a seat. Second, you wait to get the menu. Third, you wait to order. Fourth, you wait to get the food. Fifth, you wait for the bill. Sixth, you wait for the bill to be picked up. And in some restaurants you have to wait in line to pay the bill. Why do they call the people that work in the restaurants waiters? They don’t wait — you do!
2. One thing that makes patience even harder to come by is that we are all thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea that the sheer amount of work production is the measure of a person’s worth to society, company, and family.
   1. So every spare minute that can be employed in productive activity is important. Therefore if the traffic slows we become irritated and impatient.
   2. Perhaps one day there will be a flip-down keyboard on our steering wheels and a pop-up computer screen on our dash to enable us to get work done in traffic jams. Sounds like a good idea, but our problem is that we would try to work while we drive as well.
3. Most of the people alive today cannot remember the day when we had no television, automatic washers, dryers, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, and even microwave ovens. With all the instant conveniences we possess, we learn little about patience.
   1. Yet patience is a virtue which all of us need, for our sakes if not for others. As we stew over the traffic light that seems stuck on red, we are the losers.
   2. While we thought is stayed red for ten minutes, when in reality it was only one, our blood pressure shot up, our ulcer flared up, and we wound up with a bad attitude that ruined the entire evening. We need patience for ourselves and for others, and we need it now.

“Patience is the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears.” ~Barbara Johnson

1. Patience is what James addresses in our text. Perhaps we can hear the Lord speak to us about the possibilities for patience in our own lives today, that is, if we are not in too much of a hurry to get out of here.
   1. Patience is one of the fruit of the Spirit. It is a characteristic of the reborn Christian nature. As such it is one of those things that set the believer apart from the world.
   2. But patience is not one of those things that come easily. There is a price to pay for patience. The easy road leads us to impatience. Too often we travel that road.
2. The fact that Christians have trouble with patience is evident from this exhortation in verse seven: *Be patient, then, brothers (and sisters), until the Lord’s coming*. We, as believers, are encouraged to cultivate patience until the Lord comes.
   1. To illustrate patience and instruct us, James gives us three examples of patience: the farmer, the prophets, and Job. Each of these provides insight into the difficulties we all face that require patience to handle.
   2. Let’s look at each of these challenges to patience. James tells us there are several situations in which we need patience.

* When You Must Wait
* When You Are Mistreated
* When You Don’t Know Why

WHEN YOU MUST WAIT

*“A farmer patiently waits for his valuable crop to grow from the earth and for it to receive the autumn and spring rains.”* (v.7b)

1. You need patience when you must wait. Here we see the farmer as an example. If you are going to be a farmer, you have to have patience. In a church we served in Nebraska there were a number of farmers. By the very nature of their work, they were patient people. They had to plant, and then to wait. They had no control over the weather. Yet, their crop didn’t immediately sprout up. So they engaged themselves in other activity waiting for what the soil would hopefully produce eventually.
   1. In Israel, they farm in a different way than we do. They plant in our fall and reap in our spring. After they sow, comes the early rains. They are essential because they help the seed to germinate. The seed matures and grows, and in the latter part of the season, the late rains come. They make the growth into a productive crop.
   2. The farmer has no control over these things. He must resort to patience and trust in God. The farmers I knew were Christians and they prayed about the rain and about their crops. Their whole livelihood depended on their trust in God.
2. James is saying, “Look at the farmer. He can be patient. You need to be patient, too.” Why was he so patient? Well, for one thing, he knew that he had to wait, no matter what. Sometimes we have no choice but to wait. And the question that cries out from us during these times is “How long oh Lord!?!”
   1. The farmer knew that underneath that soil was growing up something precious. He also knew that he could not pull up the crop before the proper time or it would be ruined.
   2. We, much like the ground, are being plowed and cultivated by God. He does this so that we would also bear much fruit. And it takes time and it is difficult to wait on God’s timing. We want it now.
3. It would be so nice if, when we came to know Jesus, we could become a spiritual giant overnight. But it doesn’t work that way. It comes through allowing God to work on his timetable until the results come forth. Many people become frustrated in their Christian walk because they want it all — now!
   1. If the soil could speak, it would resent the plow and say so. So, when God begins to work on our lives, sometimes it is tough. But that is where patience comes in. We have to trust that God is doing His work in us. If we will just patiently seek Him, we will come forth on the other side bearing much fruit.
   2. The key is understanding that God’s timing is always perfect. If we will wait and trust too, we will find the waiting easier. In Micah 7:7 (NLT) we read: *“As for me, I look to the Lord for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.”*
4. Farmers don’t have much time for the peripheral issues. They are diligent people. I don’t know that I’ve ever met a lazy farmer. When the seed is planted and everything is done in the initial stage, he doesn’t go off and retire.

He is working in another area of the farm. While we are waiting for the Lord’s coming, we are not exhorted to put on white robes and sit on the roof of the church and wait for Him. We are to be occupied. We should be working in the church and seeking to win people to Jesus.

1. James goes on to say this in verse 9: *“Brothers and sisters, don't find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door!”* NIrV
   1. Those of us who have experienced any type of impatience know just what he is talking about here. Our tendency is to want to blame our troubles on somebody else.
   2. In the Bible, we are exhorted not to criticize, condemn, or speak evil against any brother or sister. God is the Judge. When Jesus comes back, do you want Him to find you doing your best to live in harmony with your brothers and sisters, or do you want Him to find you judging them?

WHEN YOU ARE MISTREATED

*“Brothers and sisters, think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They are an example of how to be patient when you suffer.”* (v. 10 NIrV)

1. You need patience when you are mistreated. And there is perhaps no better example of this than the prophets. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about the prophets who were ridiculed, spoken against and persecuted for the sake of God’s Kingdom and work.
   1. Prophets are an example of suffering and patience together. The word patience means to endure under.
   2. You don’t really need patience when everything around you is going right. You need it when life is hard on you. Suffering and patience seem to go hand in hand. As a matter of fact, the Bible talks about tribulation working patience in us. I’ve always tried to figure out if there wasn’t another way to get patience than through tribulation!
   3. The prophets went through tribulation because they were righteous. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*.
   4. There are times when you are going through the fire when you ask, “Why are they doing this?” It is hard to understand. The devil will tell you that if you are undergoing mistreatment, it is because of your unfaithfulness to God, when in reality it may be because of your faithfulness.
2. Why do we need patience? Because, like the prophets, if we live for Jesus, we are going to suffer. If you live by the theological teaching that living for Jesus will make your life a bed of roses, you will wake up in the thorns.
   1. God is at work in the midst of our suffering. This is something we need to hear in the church today. There are too many “health and wealth” theologians teaching their falsehoods.
   2. Your suffering may very well be a blessing from the Lord. In verse 11 we read: *“As you know, we think that people who don't give up are blessed.”* NIrV
3. We can have patience because we know that God will reward us. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12 (NCV): *“People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do, you will be happy. Rejoice and be glad, because you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven. People did the same evil things to the prophets who lived before you.”*

WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW WHY

*“You have heard that Job was patient. And you have seen what the Lord finally did for him. The Lord is full of tender mercy and loving concern.”* (v. 11b)

1. You need patience when you don’t know why. Job is book about the human condition. Some of it is difficult to understand, such as the arguments of his friends and his replies to them.
   1. We like to read about the compassion and mercy of the Lord, but think about what Job had to go through to get it. Job was God’s man. He was a righteous man. And he went through what must have appeared to be literal hell on earth before God showed His compassion.
   2. Job didn’t know about the first three chapters of the book, when Satan approached the throne of God and God have him permission to afflict Job because of his faithfulness.
2. The prevailing law of the day said that the righteous would be blessed by God. Because of that understanding, it was viewed that Job had done something wrong and was being punished by God. Job was blessed above every other man of his day.
   1. He was prosperous and had a wonderful family. It seemed he had everything his heart desired. Then suddenly came calamity and devastation. He lost all of his property, his possessions and his family, and his health.
   2. The only things he had left were his wife and his own life. The devil didn’t kill his wife because he knew he could use her later. She did not encourage him at all. In fact, she told him to curse God and die. She was another sore on his flesh.
3. Put yourself in his position: Your family is killed. Everything you owned has been destroyed. Your health is failing. You are not dying but are in constant agony. Then your “friends” tell you that you are in your position because you are not right with God. You believe that God is in control, but cannot understand what he has done wrong.

Instead of cursing God, he said, *“The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!”* (Job 1:21b NLT)

1. Job knew his life was in God’s hands but didn’t understand what was happening or why. He cries out in confusion to the Lord.
   1. But in all that, Job endured, trusting in the sovereignty of God, never once charging God falsely. At the end of the book when God speaks again, He rebukes Job’s friends because they said things that were wrong.
   2. He vindicates Job for trusting in His sovereignty. Job endured to the point where God freed him from suffering and restored him twice what he had before.
   3. Job went through problems and didn’t understand why. And that is the same question we struggle with: “What is happening?”
   4. There is nothing wrong with asking that. Not understanding is not sin. But Job never accused God of doing something He didn’t have the right to do. God has the right over our lives to do what He chooses.
2. When we believe in the sovereignty of God and understand that He is the one with the rights, not us, we will realize that whatever we are going through, He is working out His plan.
   1. We can trust that it is a righteous and wise plan. We can trust that He will not put us through any unnecessary tribulation or suffering.
   2. God is perfecting us and maturing our faith through our suffering. He will bring forth a more perfect person from it. He will give us the grace to endure it. Remember this –– God is in control!
3. Sometimes, the things that give us trouble and suffering are given to us for our own good. Why does God allow His children to suffer? He does so in order to bring us to the point where He can use us. God will only use vessels which have been broken and reshaped by His hands.
4. It says in Romans 8:28-29 NCV: *“We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan. God knew them before he made the world, and he chose them to be like his Son so that Jesus would be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.”*
5. Throughout the Bible, you will see that every servant who was used mightily had to endure a great deal first. Sometimes we view the hard times as things that are negative. They are actually some of the most positive things that will happen to us. So endure patiently. Trust Jesus Christ to bring you through the hard times. One day, Jesus will come back and bring His rewards with Him.
6. Verse 12: *“My brothers and sisters, don't take an oath when you make a promise. Don't call on heaven or earth or anything else to back up what you say. Let your ‘Yes’ be yes. And let your ‘No’ be no. If you don't, you will be judged.”* NIrV
7. We don’t need to bargain with God. He is in control. We should not make vows to God that says if He does something for us we will do something for Him. If you prove to be faithful to God and do what you say you will, you will only have to say yes or no and people will know you mean it. We must do what we say we are going to do and be found faithful.

CONCLUSION

1. We all need patience. May God work it in you and in me.
2. James tells us there are several situations in which we need patience.

• When You Must Wait

• When You Are Mistreated

• When You Don’t Know Why

1. Now the question: Are we willing to let God work patience in us during the tough times of life?
2. PRAYER & INVITATION

CLOSING THOUGHTS: “Patience is waiting. Not passively waiting. That is laziness. But to keep going when the going is hard and slow - that is patience.”