

Patience in Light of the Lord's "Soon" Return

Sermon 17 in the James Series

James 5:7-11

We have just moved out of a section which has some of the most harsh words against the rich found anywhere in the Scriptures.

By way of review

4:11 – Notice the word “brethren” – obviously addressed to Christians.

5:7 – “brethren” again – speaking once again to Christians.

4:13 – Come now you who say

5:1 – Come now you rich

In the Greek and in most English translations – you can see that James is tying these two paragraphs together.

In 4:13-5:6 are some of the harshest words against the rich found anywhere in the Scriptures.

We find a strong warning against arrogance and self-confidence

4:13-17 READ.

Are these people Christians?

James does not specifically say that they are.

These people **COULD** be Christians – or at least confessing Christians, but they are apparently living their lives with little thought of God – making their own plans – doing their own thing and continuing in that is living like a practical atheist!

So James warning is **SERIOUS!**

In **5:1-6** – there is no doubt that James has turned his attention to the wealthy ones who were persecutors of the church.

Most likely – wealthy Jewish individuals – and remember – the Jewish culture were the first persecutors of the church.

Ostracizing Christians from society.

Refusing to let Christians have meaningful employment.

Seeking to stamp out “Christianity” and the name of “Christ”.

READ

James is a very early epistle – and Pastor James himself was centered in Jerusalem.

He saw and probably experienced first-hand this type of persecution.

This type of persecution against their own countrymen was in **DIRECT VIOLATION** of the O.T. laws that the Jews claimed they believed.

Deut 24:14-15 -- You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, **whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates.** ¹⁵ Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; **lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.**

Today – we move to a new section.

As James prepares to close his epistle – he encourages his brethren once again to endure – and stand strong in the midst of difficulties.

I. Be Patient in the Light of the Coming of the Lord 7-9

II. Biblical Examples of Patience 10-11a

III. Be Patient in the Light of God’s Compassion and Mercy – 11b

We will deal with point one today – and then by God’s grace deal with points two and three next week.

5:7-11 READ

I. The Theme of Verses 7-11 -- Patience and Perseverance

Two related words stand out in this passage

PATIENCE – used 4 times in verses 7-10

Twice – James uses it as an imperative – a command.

v. 7 – Be Patient

v. 8 – Be Patient

A form of **MACROTHUMIA** – literally “long tempered”.

makrothumia

The opposite of what we could call having “a short fuse”.

The Greek word operates much like our English word in that it can be used as a noun or a verb – just like we can talk about the action of “being patient” or possess the noun “patience”.

-- The Greek word means everything YOU THINK patience means.

-- In this context – it is the need for patience in the face of suffering – and the prophets of old become the example of patience for us.

HUPOMONE -- PERSEVERANCE (endure or steadfast)

Again – the Greek operates much like our English.

It’s a totally different word than patient -- but the meaning is very very close.

The word **HUPOMONE** is used twice (once as endure and once as perseverance in the NKJV) or as steadfast and steadfastness in the ESV – both in verse 11.

hupomone

“Cheerful or hopeful endurance. (Strongs)

“To continue to bear up despite difficulty and suffering” – Louw and Nida

“Patient continuance in waiting.” (Strongs)

We’ll deal with those aspects in more detail next week.

II. The Judge is Standing at the Door

There are some Christians who spend ALL THEIR TIME talking about prophecy – and the second coming – and when this is the case – far too often the discussion stops being about the Bible – and tends toward wild speculations about the end times.

But, as with most things – many Christians OVER-REACT against this error by ignoring prophecy altogether – forgetting that we are exhorted over and over again that the Lord’s coming is NEAR.

Eschatology – the Doctrine of Last Things IS important.

In the OT – their eschatology pointed to the coming of Messiah!

We can’t expect that they would have understood everything.

The Disciples themselves often didn’t understand Christ’s words until after His resurrection.

But the Jewish leaders COULD understand some things.

Remember – shortly after Christ’s birth -- when the Wise Men came from the east asking, “Where is he who is born King of the Jews” – the Jewish rabbis were able to say that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

And even Herod’s slaughter of those under 2 years old had been prophesied by Jeremiah.

The leaders MISSED the coming of Christ – not so much because it caught them completely off guard

They missed it primarily because they DID NOT LIKE THE WAY that God had ordained for it to occur.

-- They didn’t want a lowly king.

-- They didn’t want a spiritual kingdom.

And maybe more importantly – they didn’t want to lose their own power and authority.

-- They didn’t want ANYONE eclipsing THEM in importance not even the Son of God Himself!

Eschatology is important.
Christ came.
Christ is coming again!
James says, “The judge is standing at the door”.

You’ve been in our American courts.
Everyone files into the courtroom.
Everyone settles in – and then we wait.

The lawyers are there.
The defendant is there.
The jury or the prospective jury is there.
All the court officials are there
THEN the judge enters and the baliff says, “ALL RISE”.

The judge pounds his gavel – and court officially begins.

That contemporary American courtroom scenario is not a bad illustration for what James is telling us.

The judge is standing at the door, but you don’t see him or her.
He or she is going to enter very soon.
There is anticipation for his entry.

But it is not accident that James uses the illustration of a Judge.
First of all – Christ IS the great judge.
All judgment has been committed to the Son.
BUT THE TIME of judgment is not yet.
So the Christians must be patient.

They are being oppressed.
They are being mistreated.
It would be easy for them to become discouraged and think that God Himself does not care.

No, the judge is coming.
And when he comes – the end of all things as we know them today comes.

And He is coming SOON.

But that does not mean He is coming at any moment – we believe in the SOON return of the Lord – but we need not get caught up in the speculation of ANY MOMENT NOW!

Such a view could be crippling and cause us to even refuse to make plans for the future – assuming there will BE no future.

We have seen this play out just recently in a very small scale with the prophecies of Harold Camping – who thought the Lord was going to return on May 21, 2011.

He just became another in a long line of date setters – who have all been proven wrong.

Regarding the Lord's return – we have need of patience.

III. The “Nearness” of Christ's Return

II Peter 3:1-7

It would appear that many 1st century Christians anticipated the coming of the Lord in their own lifetime.

And in that first century WE DID see the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the obliteration of the Jewish system of worship – which had already ceased to be a true religion when Christ tore the veil of the Temple in two.

Peter focuses on the skeptics that do not believe the Lord is coming – because He hasn't come yet.

Those skeptics existed then – and they still exist today.

A. Defining the “Nearness” of the Second Coming

How can we say the coming of the Lord is “near”?

Rev. 22:7, 20

1. Nearness from the perspective of importance.

Let's suppose we knew the Lord was going to come this year.

We would all admit – his coming is near.

But, how would that explain the fact that the Bible talks about his coming being “near” for those in the first century?

Some have sought to redefine his “coming”.

They say ALL the “near” passages were fulfilled in 70 AD.

Now, that is helpful in some of the passages used by those who love to talk about “prophecy”.

For instance -- most of Matthew 24 deals with 70 AD – not a future “tribulation”.

Let's examine the Biblical doctrine of “nearness”.

Romans 13:11

Something may be near, and it can still get nearer.

The more important that thing is, the more we will take notice of it from farther away.

An Illustration.

I have traveled to Tucson NUMEROUS times.

On I-10 there is a sign that says “Quartzsite 30 miles.
Los Angeles 245 miles.”

Now, I have driven that road more than 100 times – and I can assure you – going the other direction there is not a sign in that says, “*Quartzsite, 245 miles*”.

Why?

Because, Quartzsite is small and relatively insignificant.

When you are in the desert, in no man's land – saying it is 30 miles away is important because it is the next town.

But, Quartzsite 245 miles?

There are a host of towns, that are closer and more important.

But, you can find signs for LA a good 500 miles away.
Because it is important. It is monumental.

You are NEAR to LA when you are 500 miles away.
You are NEARER when you are in Quartzsite.

We can talk about the Second Coming being NEAR even though it was at least 2000 years away when the NT was written.

Whenever it comes, even if it is 2000 years from now, it is still nearer.

2. Nearness from the perspective of the Lord

2 Peter 3:8

This verse has been BADLY abused.

It is NOT a formula to calculate the Second Coming.

The Lord must come by the year 2000, because the earth is 6000 years old, and the millennium is another 1000 years, and that makes 7000 years which is the perfect number.

That's an absolute misuse of Scripture – we can even say it is silly in the year 2014 – but it had a lot of believers in 1976!

This verse is not intended as a formula to calculate the Second Coming.

No man knows the day nor the hour.

So we can't turn this into a mathematical formula and say a thousand years equals a day – so we can calculate when the Lord is returning.

The point is – 2000 years is nothing to the Lord, and if He were to ordain the Second Coming is still 10,000 years away – **it is still near** from the perspective of God and eternity.

Eschatology is important and is in the Bible for a purpose.

- The purpose is not to satisfy our curiosity.
- The purpose is not so that Tim LaHaye could write his BEST-SELLING novels in the “Left Behind” series.
- The purpose is not so preachers and tele-evangelists could become Biblical FORTUNE-TELLERS

3. The Three Primary Purposes of Prophecy

There are three primary reasons that eschatology exists in the Scriptures:

2 Peter 3:9-14a

Here we see in the simplest form possible – the outline for how everything we see – in the way it is today -- is going to come to an end.

READ 3:9-14a

The three purposes for prophecy

1) As a spur to patience.

v. 9, 14a – be glad God is patient and we need patience.
He is longsuffering toward us – or toward you.
Longsuffering to Christians.

Not willing that He would lose a single Christian.
Every elect person WILL come to grace by God’s grace!

2) As a spur to holiness for the Christian.

v. 11, 14, 17-18

3) As a warning to the Lost

There is a day of judgment coming.
Things will not continue as they are forever.

Men will be WILLFULLY IGNORANT of this as Peter says in
verse 5.

Men will be SCOFFERS because it hasn't happened yet.

Men were scoffers in the days of Noah.
But when Noah entered the ark – GOD CLOSED THE DOOR – and
it was too late.

The flood came and carried them all away.
My friends – TODAY is the day of salvation.

You have NO guarantee of tomorrow.

Some think – well, in 20 years I will repent and come to
the Lord.

You are not guaranteed 20 years.
What if the Lord returns.
OR – what if you die today?

We have a tendency to think we have FOREVER.

As we get a little older we begin to realize our days are
numbered – but one proof of total depravity is that older
folks often become MORE HARDENED to the gospel.

Trust Christ – TODAY – for if you don't – it is very possible you never will.

PRAY