

November 20th Sermon

Faith that Works - Session 8

Praying Patiently- James 5:7-20

Introduction

When do you pray? Why do you pray? For many of us when we pray we concentrate on how we need God to intervene in our lives to fix something or give us something. And for some of us, we are only brought to our knees when things are really, really bad. And then we expect instant results—we have no patience when we are desperate. It's difficult to be patient when we are in terrible pain, or someone we love is facing death, or our life is tumbling out of control.



Reread James 1:2-8. James starts his letter urging perseverance during hard times and explaining how that makes us whole and complete. He ends his letter by encouraging his audience to be patient and to pray while they persevere so that their life in Jesus will be complete.

This lesson begins with patience, then moves on to prayer, and finishes with redemption. Reflect on the need to grow in patience and strengthen our prayer life before we can serve others and bring them God's message.

Say a short prayer thanking God for listening to you and loving you.

Patience

Patience and prayer go together. When we are on our knees in humility before our Almighty God, our prayers are heard. But waiting for God's direction requires patience. It has been said, "If you pray for patience, God will give you lots of opportunities to practice it." Do you ever feel like you are tired of practicing patience?

Times were hard in Jerusalem and the greater Mediterranean area for followers of The Way. Jewish Christians were justifiably discouraged and often felt threatened. James is determined to teach them how to persevere through their suffering. He had a formula, Patience + Prayer = Blessings.

Read James 5:7-12.

Patience is from the Greek words, *makrothumia* and *makrothumeo*. They mean long-suffering, fortitude, forbearance, and endurance in waiting. Patience is a passive word for lying back and accepting suffering. Perseverance (used in James 5:11 and 1:3-4) is an active word indicating the willingness to “hang in there” and to consciously strive to live through the suffering.

Group Discussion

- What have you learned from enduring suffering in your life?
- In verse 5:8 James uses the phrase stand firm (NIV) or establish your hearts (KJV). In Greek the words are *sterizo* and *cardia* which together mean to steer your heart resolutely in a certain direction. How does this clarify the message in this verse?
- Why should we stand firm?
- What does 2 Peter 3:9 tell us about God’s patience? How can we follow this example?
- Why is grumbling, murmuring, or groaning a dangerous reaction to suffering according to James? (see James 1:26, 5:9) What should we do instead (James 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 4:5)?
- There are many other prophets and faithful people besides Job who have suffered in patience, too. Read Hebrews 11:32-40 and list the ways God’s faithful have suffered. How can you use these examples to strengthen your resolve when times are tough? How can James 5:11 comfort you?

Individual Study

- The Lord’s coming: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, Revelation 1:7.
- Establish your heart: Psalm 57:7, 112:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Proverbs 4:23.
- Blessings of perseverance: James says that those who persevere under suffering will be blessed. Read these verses to discover some of the blessings. James 1:12, Matthew 5:10-12, Revelation 2:7, 2:26-28, 3:5, 3:21.
- Oaths: In James 5:12, the word used for swear is *omnuo* which does not mean curse. It means to declare an oath to guarantee that what you are saying is true and trustworthy. Check out these verses on oaths: Deuteronomy 6:13, Jeremiah 12:16, Matthew 26:63-64, Romans 1:9, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Galatians 1:20, 2 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 6:13.

Prayer

Read James 5:13-18.

There are four different Greek words used for prayer in this section of James. The root word, *euche*, is used in verse 15 and means a wish or petition to God. Two words that are derived from *euche* are *euchomai*, used in verse 16, and *proseuchomai*, used several times. Adding the “pros” prefix to *euchomai* adds an intensity and direction to the prayer. Another

word, *deesis*, is used in verse 16. It has a connotation of a petition, request, or supplication. Keep these meanings in mind as we discuss this section.

Group Discussion

- When is your prayer *proseuchomai* (having intensity and direction)?
- Prayer is a conversation with God. It involves talking and listening. What percentage of your prayer is you talking versus you listening? How can you add in more listening?
- Describe how prayer differs depending on the motivation (illness, trouble, thanksgiving, repentance, etc.) What is your most common motivation for prayer?
- What do these verses say about seeking the Lord in prayer? Psalm 18:6, 22:24, 34:10.
- Why does James choose Elijah as an example of prayer?
- Share a time when God answered your most fervent prayer.
- How does James suggest we deal with illness? Describe your experience with hands on healing prayer?
- According to Acts 6:4 and James 5:14, what is the responsibility of elders?
- In James 5:15, what things contribute to healing? How do repentance, confession, and forgiveness help in the healing process?
- How can sin make you sick? What does James 5:16 suggest will help?
- How do you feel about confessing your sin to another person? Describe any experience you have had with this type of confession.
- What makes a person righteous in God's eyes so that their prayers will be powerful and effective? See Romans 4:20-25.

Individual Study

- Prayer: Psalm 34:1, Luke 11:5-13, 17:11-19, Ephesians 5:20, Hebrews 13:15, 1 John 5:14-15.
- When things are going well, we take life for granted and often forget to pray or pray out of habit. How do these verses encourage us to pray in good times? 1 Chronicles 16:8-11, Psalms 9:2, 95:2-7a, and Ephesians 5:18-20.

Serving and Saving

Read James 5:19-20.

Let us look again at James' audience for this letter. In verses 5:7, 10, and 19 (as well as 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:10,12; 4:11) James uses the Greek word, *adelphos*, to address his listeners. This word is translated in English language Bibles as brethren, brothers, or brothers and sisters. The word's actual meaning refers to individuals who are alike "from the womb" thus indicating a sibling relationship.

But what might it mean to a Christian, one who is born again in Christ Jesus? We are all reborn from the same source--Jesus Christ. Whether you heard James' message 2000 years ago while gathering with your fellow followers of the Way or are reading it in your own Bible today, James is writing his message to you, *adelphos* in Christ!

Group Discussion

- According to James 5:19-20, what is one of the most important actions we can take as a Christian?
- We know that only God can truly turn a heart to him (John 6:44, Ephesians 1:7), but how are we to help others according to 2 Timothy 2:24-26?
- How is John 15:12-13 put into action when you help a person find their way back to Christ?

Commitment

This week I will improve my prayer life by taking the following action:

This series on James has impressed upon my heart the need for me to
