

Wiseguy

Studies in the Book of James

Text

James 5:7-12

Topic

James uses the farmer as one example of patient waiting for the coming of the Lord

Title

"Hi-ho, the Derry-o, the Farmer in the Bi-bell"

Introduction

After first service, once you're done fellowshipping, you might want to go out for breakfast.

After second service, you'll probably be thinking about someplace to eat lunch.

Wherever you decide to go, you will most likely have to **wait**. You give your name, and the size of your party... And you **wait**.

Hopefully, after not too long, you are escorted to your table. What do you do there?

You wait some more. Hopefully not too long; but you **wait**.

Once you've ordered - *you wait for your food to arrive.*

When you have finished eating, (unless you're at *Chili's* where you can pay at the table), you wait for the check - **twice**, because it has to come back to you after you've put your card or cash in the wallet.

My question is this: "Doesn't all that waiting make **you** the waiter?"

According to one site I consulted, the average person throughout their lifetime spends **five years** waiting in lines and queues.

This is why I don't mind seeing people who are waiting doing stuff on their smart phones.

Smart phones have taken the sting out of waiting. When I whip out my iPhone 6, and return to my turn on *Words with Friends*, waiting has no power over me.

In fact, you can go ahead of me; I'm enjoying waiting.

In our verses, James suggests we see ourselves as the waiters:

1. We are waiting for the coming of the Lord, and,
2. Our waiting takes place among other believers.

How we wait for the Lord among other believers is important. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Have A Patient Expectation While Waiting For The Lord, and #2 You Should Have A Persevering Endurance While Waiting With The Saints.

#1 You Should Have A Patient Expectation While Waiting For The Lord

(v7-8)

Whenever I mention *Disneyland*, someone has a horror story to tell of the time they waited in line practically all day for a particular attraction. At least Disney tells you ahead of time, by signage, how long the wait will be, so that you can make an informed choice.

You can also download any number of apps that will tell you the current wait times, so you can have a better strategy for waiting.

And, finally, you can plan ahead, and get Fast Passes, to minimize your wait times.

Look at it this way: When it's all said and done, since you are going to spend five years of your life in lines and queues anyway, why not do most of it at the Happiest Place on Earth?

Christians are called to a very special, a very exciting, kind of waiting. **We are waiting for the coming of the Lord.**

Jas 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...

Was James referring to the Lord's coming back to the earth, to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth?

No; he had to be referring to another "coming." In verse eight James says that this "coming of the Lord **is at hand.**" It can be translated, *it is near.*

One of the commentators I especially trust for his scholarship says of this phrase,

His statement here leaves no doubt that James, like Paul, Peter, and John (Phil. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 John 2:18), looked for the personal return of Jesus Christ as **imminent**. And this attitude of expectancy was in keeping with the attitude that Christ had inculcated (Mark 13:32–37). The Lord had instructed His followers to be ready and watching; if they had believed that He would not return until centuries later, there would have been no occasion or need to watch for His return (D. Edmund Hiebert).

James was talking about a coming of the Lord that was imminent - meaning it could happen at any moment. The coming of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God is *not* an imminent event; it is preceded by at least the seven-years of the Tribulation.

The imminent coming of Jesus is what we commonly call the rapture of the church. It is a coming promised by Jesus to the members of the church, from the Day of Pentecost forward, until He comes.

It is the coming clearly taught in First Thessalonians 4:13-17.

1Th 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1Th 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The "dead in Christ" from the church age will be raised from the dead, and given their resurrection bodies. Then living believers will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be caught-up to Heaven by Jesus with the resurrected saints.

At some point after this game-changing event, the seven year Tribulation on the earth will begin. It is at the end of those seven years that Jesus returns in His Second Coming - not *for* the church, but *with* the church. It is then He establishes the Kingdom of God on the earth for one thousand years.

"If the hope of the Lord's return is relegated to such a remote future that it has no present impact on our way of living, then this great Christian hope no longer exercises the vital influence upon Christian living that James and other New Testament writers present it as having" (Hiebert).

Interestingly, James wasn't teaching them about the rapture. His wording assumes they all knew about it, and were aware of its imminence.

James was giving them, and us, an important teaching on exactly *how* to wait for an event that is imminent.

Do you know what an oxymoron is? It's not a person addicted to oxycodone. It is a combination of contradictory or incongruous words. Bitter sweet is an example; so is dull roar, and found missing.

Waiting for something that is imminent isn't a true oxymoron, but they are two somewhat contradictory ideas. If it's imminent, there's no waiting; if you're waiting, how can it be imminent?

Waiting for the imminent coming of the Lord would create a problem in the Gentile church of Thessalonica. Since Jesus' return was imminent, many believers quit their jobs. In a way, it made sense.

The apostle Paul had to get involved, telling the church to 'quit' supporting them. They should be working while waiting.

Waiting for Jesus' imminent coming requires that we keep working, both in the world and for the Lord, while simultaneously proclaiming He could come at any moment.

To help illustrate this special kind of waiting, James said,

[Jas 5:7](#) ... See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

God is in control of the rains. Similarly, God is in control of the coming of Jesus. It is imminent, but that only means it could be today, or might be tomorrow. It's in His timing.

The farmer must work furiously within God's time table. He must prepare the fields for planting, then sow the seeds, then tend the fields. He must harvest the crop, and take the fruit to market.

Similarly, we are to work furiously within God's timetable.

The fact that the Lord could return at any moment is meant to encourage me to stay busy. It should never have the opposite effect.

Jas 5:8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

We should have the same active patience of the farmer.

"Establish [our] hearts" is an exhortation to go on growing in the Lord. It calls on us to work towards producing mature fruit in our walk. Our hearts are the field upon which the word was sown, and has taken root. We're to tend to them, and bring forth fruit, a hundredfold, spurred-on by the imminence of the coming of the Lord.

It has become popular for critics of pretribulational, premillennial teaching, to suggest that it promotes an escapism that leads us to inactivity.

James, and all the writers of the Bible, **came to the exact opposite conclusion.** The imminent, and therefore pre-trib/pre-mil coming of the Lord, incites furious activity.

Jesus **is** coming. *Get busy.*

#2 You Should Have A Persevering Endurance While Waiting With The Saints

(v9-12)

There is a commonly quoted poem that is a good set-up for what James wants to say in the remaining verses:

7 of 16

James 5:7-12

"Hi-ho, the Derry-o, the Farmer in the Bi-Bell"

*To walk above with saints we love,
That will indeed be glory;*

*To walk below with saints we know -
Well, that's another story!*

Warren Wiersbe likes to say, "No doubt you have heard it said, If you ever find the perfect church, *please don't join*. If you do, *it won't be perfect anymore*."

Local churches are made-up of flawed human beings saved by God's grace. We are each on track to becoming perfect, but we are all currently imperfect works in progress as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

It's a formula for problems, so James turns his attention to our being patient with one another as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

Jas 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

James is definitely talking to and about Christians, calling us all - men and women - "brethren." We can't wiggle out of this exhortation.

Are you familiar with the "Mister" series of children's books? Mr. Tickle was always our favorite, because you'd tickle the kids at the end.

There is Mr. Grumble. He's described as "hating laughter, and hating singing." Mr. Grumble's name suited him well. "Bah," he would grumble every morning when his alarm clock rang. "The start of yet another horrible day" [he said].

Mr. Grumble doesn't care if Mr. Bump gets hurt.

Apparently, grumbling was a major problem among the dispersed Messianic Jews James was writing to. The word he used describes an inner feeling of dissatisfaction and personal irritation with other believers. It arises in your heart especially when you are mistreated.

It's not slandering, or gossiping, or even murmuring. That's probably why we don't see it as sin; it's quiet and personal. But it is against others, and it affects our relationship with them, and it can become open and hostile.

You won't be able to "establish your heart" so long as you have grumbling in it.

"Lest you be condemned" doesn't have anything to do with your eternal destination. He's talking to believers who are going to Heaven.

It means *you will be judged*, and it's referring to the day you stand before Jesus at His reward seat, where He will be the Judge of your works.

We should always deal with sin immediately, because the Lord is "standing at the door," ready to return for us.

Until that day, we're always going to have problems with others in the church. Instead of grumbling about other believers, James calls upon us to have another kind of patience - a persevering endurance.

He sees that kind of persevering endurance among brethren in two places in their Scriptures: Among the prophets, and in Job.

Jas 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

The "prophets" were called and sent by God to "speak in the name of the Lord."

Ambassadors of Heaven, they were nevertheless, most of them, made to "suffer" at the hands, not of the Gentiles, but of their own people.

Jeremiah comes immediately to mind. I found this short list of his sufferings:

- He was persecuted by his own family.
- He was plotted against by the people of his hometown.
- He was rejected and reviled by his peers in the religious world.
- Pashur, the chief temple priest, had him whipped and put in stocks.
- He preached a sermon at the Temple gate and was nearly killed by an angry mob for predicting the Temple would be destroyed.
- He was cast down into an empty, filthy cistern, and left to die.
- He saw his original manuscript burned by wicked King Jehoiakim.
- He was forced to go to Egypt against his will when the Jews refused to heed his prophecies to not go there.

Most of God's prophets were badly treated by their countrymen. In the Book of Hebrews we read this about the servants of God:

Heb 11:36 ...Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented...

Just before he was stoned to death for preaching Jesus to the Jews, Stephen said to his persecutors, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the [Messiah]..." (Acts 7:52).

It's sad to say this, but you ought to expect to be mistreated by other believers. Remember, there's no perfect church.

We see that the prophets are an example of suffering, but what about "patience?"

The kind of "patience" James has in mind is what we would call *perseverance*. It is enduring suffering til the end, without quitting.

James said, in verse eleven, "Indeed we count them blessed who **endure**." Endurance... Perseverance... That's what he was counseling.

Jeremiah wanted to give-up. In fact he never wanted to start serving the Lord as a prophet in the first place. He persevered to the end, faithful to his calling by God despite the suffering.

We shouldn't quit working on account of the imminence of the Lord's return. Likewise, we shouldn't quit on account of mistreatment, even when it is at the hands of those who we minister to, and are called to minister to us.

James gives a second example of persevering to the end:

Jas 5:11 ... You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

You are familiar with the story of Job. Satan accused him before God of serving the Lord solely because he was being blessed by Heaven on a material basis. The devil suggested that if Job's material blessings were withdrawn, that he would curse God.

God knew Job was spiritual, so He allowed Satan to test Job. He lost everything - including his children and his health. For most of the book, he is sitting in the local dump, using shards of broken pottery to scrape the boils he has from his head to his toes.

"When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him" (Job 2:11 NIV).

They did comfort Job, at first. But his friends quickly entered a vicious cycle of argument and accusation.

It incited quite a lot of grumbling from Job. In using Job as an example, James isn't excusing it, or overlooking it. He was a believer being mistreated by his peers who shouldn't have grumbled, but he nevertheless persevered.

James says, you've "seen the **end** intended by the Lord." Even though others were deriding him, Job persevered. He should have done it without grumbling, because of where it would "end."

Everyone familiar with Job knows the "end." Spoiler alert - if you aren't familiar with his end, here it comes:

Job 42:10 And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Job 42:11 Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold.

Job 42:12 Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

Job 42:13 He also had seven sons and three daughters...

Job 42:15 In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

Job 42:16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations.

Job 42:17 So Job died, old and full of days.

By seeing the "end" of the lives of Bible characters, like Job, we get an idea of the "end" God intends for our lives. And we are reminded that grumbling is counterproductive.

I don't know why, but the Johnny Cash classic, *A Boy Named Sue*, comes to mind. Because of his girlish name, Sue is always getting into scrapes; he hates his name.

(To which I say, "Just change it to Sam." But that wouldn't be country).

He eventually finds and confronts his absent father, whom he tries to kill. His deadbeat-dad explains that he knew he wouldn't be around to make his son a man, so he gave him the name "Sue" so he'd have to be tough growing up. It worked.

ANYWAY, as the song ends, Sue understands. And he says,

*And if I ever have a son, I think I'm gonna name him
Bill or George! Anything but Sue! I still hate that name!*

At the end of his trial, do you think Job might have said, "I understand what the Lord wanted to do, but I'd rather He would have left me alone?"

Well, here is what Job **did** say:

[Job 23:10](#) But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

He persevered, and he experienced the "end" God intended.

James gives us an insight into what Job learned about God when he says, "the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

Wow. If we were in a book club, and had just finished reading Job, and were asked, "What do you see most about God in this book,?" would we answer, "That He is very compassionate and merciful?"

That IS the answer, whether we see it or not. Nonbelievers certainly do not see it. Job is a favorite criticism they level against God, for being uncompassionate and merciless.

Job did some grumbling, but we just read, "And the LORD restored Job's losses **when he prayed for his friends.**"

He quit his grumbling, and he replaced it with prayer that pleased the Lord.

If and when you have identified grumbling in your heart, pray for those you've grumbled against.

James turns his attention to another problem between the saints: The making of non-binding oaths.

Jas 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

Apparently, the Jews had devised an elaborate system of oaths, by which they might "swear" that something was true when it was not true. Depending on what you swore by, e.g., God or the Temple or something else in Heaven or on the earth, you could argue that your oath was not binding.

Kids on the playground understand this. When I was in elementary school, our oath was, *Cross my heart and hope to die; Stick a needle in my eye.*

It was totally binding; but there was one exception. Do you know what it was? **If you had your fingers crossed, all bets were off.**

Crossed fingers invalidate promises and allow you to tell lies without your pants catching on fire. In the film *The Truman Show*, Truman realizes his marriage is a farce when he discovers a wedding photo of his wife with her fingers crossed.

James wasn't saying you can never make a vow, or swear an oath. In the Bi-bell, God Himself is described as swearing an oath (Hebrews 6:13).

James wanted the Messianic Jews to drop the whole cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die habit, and always tell the truth.

Honesty is the way we ought to be waiting with other believers.

Here is what we've emphasized today:

- Imminent waiting calls for a special kind of patience - an active, working patience. We certainly believe the Lord's coming could happen now - but we are not escapists who shirk our responsibilities. We are those who work furiously to spread the Gospel while there is time.
- Being among God's people on earth requires perseverance. You will be mistreated by other imperfect saints; and you will mistreat others, no matter that you don't want to. Rather than be Mr. or Mrs. Grumble, **pray** for those who mistreat you, and look past it to the "end" God has in mind.

He is working all things together for good for those who love Him.