

Week 14: James: Perseverance

Hook



Main Point: Those who persevere to the end will receive eternal life with Jesus in His kingdom.

Q: Do you find that people have more or less patience these days than they used to?

Disney made a strategic bet that most parkgoers would value their time more than the cost of avoiding long waits, which, on average, last about 38 minutes.¹ In 2024, they launched a new offering: the Lightning Lane Premier Pass. This premium upgrade grants guests one-time access to select attractions, bypassing the standard lines altogether.² But convenience comes at a steep price – up to \$449 per person per day. When added to the regular ticket price (ranging from \$109 to \$189), a family of four could easily spend more than \$1,500 in one day, just for park entry and the Premier Pass.³

Q: Would you pay for the Premier Pass?

Q: What do services like the Premier Pass say about our patience? What other services can you think of that bank on consumers lacking patience?

Q: Do you think instant gratification affects our spiritual lives?

Transition: In today's passage, God's Word challenges us to wait patiently – not in a theme park, but to wait patiently on the Lord in this world during seasons of great difficulty.

RECAP: So far, we have learned that James is wisdom literature, applied wisdom that gives practical advice for real everyday situations from a Christ-centered perspective. In chapter 1, James touched on some main ideas – wisdom, trials and temptations, true religion, and being doers of the Word. In chapters 2–5, James returned to these topics and went into more detail about how to apply them to our lives:

- That showing partiality to the rich is a sin because it is not loving the poor as ourselves
- The difference between the law of works-righteousness and “the law of liberty” and why we should choose grace
- That faith without works is dead, using Abraham and Rahab as examples from the Old Testament to show us faith demonstrated by action.
- How difficult it is to control our tongue and the damage it can cause when we don’t
- How godly wisdom is shown through action
- That friendship with the world is enmity with God
- That we should live our lives remembering that God is God, and we are not
- That no one should mistreat others for financial gain or live in self-indulgence

In this lesson, we’re nearing the end of the letter, and James talks to his people about perseverance. Things are hard now, but Jesus is coming back to judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous – be patient and stand firm to the end.

Week 14: *James: Perseverance*

Book

Main Point: Those who persevere to the end will receive eternal life with Jesus in His kingdom.

James 5:7–9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 [Read]

Talking Point 1: We can be patient through suffering because one day Jesus will come back.

Q: Why did James tell the people to be patient through the suffering on earth?

Q: Why is the Day of the Lord – the Day of Judgment – a good thing for God’s people?

When Jesus arrived on the scene, the people of Israel were expecting a Messiah to come fight their enemies, be victorious, and usher in the kingdom of God. That was the picture of Messiah they saw in the Old Testament prophets. But the Old Testament prophets also spoke of Messiah as a suffering servant who would die for His people (Isaiah 53). There were two seemingly contradictory images of the Messiah because God’s plan was for the Messiah to come in two different ways at two different points in history. The first is in the past for us – 2,000 years ago when Jesus came in first-century Israel. The Second Coming is in our future, and we do not know the date or time it will happen.

The people to whom James was writing this letter were really suffering. They were experiencing persecution for their faith and social and spiritual conflict.⁴ But James encouraged them to be patient through the hard times and hold on to the promise that Jesus is coming back to make all things new. When He comes, He will punish the wicked and vindicate the righteous. And there will be no more suffering, sickness or pain (Revelation 21:4). James compared it to the farmer who must wait through the early rains and the late rains to finally see the fruit of the harvest.

In the ancient world, there were two major rainy seasons. The early rains typically fell in the fall, softening the ground for planting. Later rains came in the spring, bringing crops to maturity for the harvest. Because Israel was such a dry area, the land depended on both rainy seasons to have a fruitful harvest. The timing and abundance of the rains could make or break the crop for the year, but God promised to provide these rains for His people as long as they were faithful to Him (Deuteronomy 11:13–14). Theologically,

the early and late rains were seen as manifestations of God's covenantal faithfulness, and drought was seen as a judgment (1 Kings 17).

The farmer waits and trusts that the Lord will provide the harvest. God's people must also trust that the Lord will do what He promised and wait patiently for the day Christ comes again. But that doesn't mean we just sit around and wait. The farmer does what he can to plant, water, and fertilize the crop, though he knows only God can produce the growth (1 Corinthians 3:5–9). While we wait for Jesus to return, we should do what we can to build the kingdom of God here on earth, to draw people to Him and bring the ministry of reconciliation to the world (2 Corinthians 5:17–20). Like the farmer who trusts that God will bring the harvest, we can trust that Jesus will come again at just the right time.

Q: Why is it difficult to be patient as we wait for Christ's return?

Q: How does Jesus' return change our perspective on the current suffering that we are enduring?

Q: How does it give you hope to know Christ will one day make all things new?

James 5:10–11; Job 1:20–22; and Romans 5:3–5 [Read]

Talking Point 2: It is possible to endure much suffering but remain faithful to God.

Q: How did Job remain faithful to God in the midst of suffering?

Q: What does Romans tell us about the purpose of suffering?

The book of Job is wisdom literature, like James, but it is a different style of writing than Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or Psalms. Job gives us wisdom (practical advice for how to live faithfully by God's ways) through the story of one righteous man. Job was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He even made daily sacrifices on behalf of his children just in case they had sinned and didn't realize it. He was also very wealthy. One day Satan came to God and asked to attack Job. Satan said Job only honored God because God had blessed him and because he never had any trials in his life. God agreed, trusting Job to remain faithful to Him no matter what the circumstance, which he did. Even when Job lost everything he had, including his children, he responded by saying, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). What incredible faith!

Satan attacked Job in every possible way, yet Job remained faithful to God through it all. He trusted that God was in control and had a plan for his life, and if he were going

through something difficult, it was part of God's molding him into who God wanted him to be. When his friends tried to convince him that he must have done something wrong to "earn" this suffering from God, Job spoke against that theology the same way Jesus did when His disciples encountered the blind man and asked who had sinned, him or his parents, to earn being born blind. Jesus said neither. Sickness and suffering are not necessarily punishments from God; they are a natural part of life in a fallen world. Jesus said the man was born blind so God's glory could be shown in him when Jesus healed him of his blindness (John 9:1–7).

Job did not do anything wrong to deserve suffering. That's not how God works. Suffering is simply a natural part of life in this fallen world. God does not cause suffering (James 1:13), but God is able to redeem suffering for our good. Romans tells us that suffering produces perseverance. Just as "suffering" through exercise gives us greater endurance to handle more exercise, so suffering in this world gives us greater endurance to handle more suffering. Perseverance builds character, so that we do not become entitled and self-centered, where we think that we deserve to have everything handed to us. We understand how to handle what life throws our way. And character produces hope, that hope we talked about in the first talking point, hope in the future coming of Christ, when He will make all things new.

The example of how Job lived his life and how so many prophets and apostles endured great suffering for the name of Jesus should encourage us that we can have the strength to remain steadfast in the midst of suffering. In the letters to the seven churches in Revelation, Jesus told all those who persevered and overcame the struggles of this world that they would receive everlasting life and blessing in His kingdom (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, et. al.). We can hold on and be patient through suffering because we know the great blessing and inheritance of the kingdom of God in the age to come. Romans promises that if we suffer with Christ, we will be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17).

No matter what you are going through, God can redeem it for your good. No matter how hard things are, you can remain faithful to God when you put your trust in Him and believe He has a plan and a purpose in it all and is using it for your good. When you remember that God is God and you are not, you can join Job in saying the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. We have to trust that He knows what He is doing. No matter what you are going through, God can redeem it for your good (Romans 8:28-29).

Q: Describe any suffering you have experienced. How have you seen God work it for your good, to build endurance and spiritual strength in you?

Q: What would it look like for you to remain faithful to God through times of suffering?

Q: What does it mean to remain steadfast during trial? What does that look like in your every day life?

James 5:12 and Matthew 5:33–37 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people don't need to swear by anything; their word alone is trustworthy.

Q: Why might someone swear by God or something else when they make a promise?

Q: Why did James and Jesus tell the people not to do that?

In the ancient world, oaths were a common practice used to bind agreements. Swearing by something greater than you – a god, sacred object, heaven, etc. – was intended to add weight to your words. People took an oath when the other person didn't trust they would keep their promise. Oaths were binding. If you made an oath rashly that you later realized wasn't a smart idea, you still had to abide by it, like the story of Jephthah in the book of Judges. He made an oath that if God gave him victory in battle, he would sacrifice the first thing that came out of the door when he returned home, thinking it would be an animal. But it was his only child, his daughter, who greeted him first, and he had to honor his vow and sacrifice her (Judges 11:31–40).

The Old Testament law taught God's people to keep the oaths they made to Him because He is holy and they didn't want to dishonor Him, but Jesus warned against making oaths in the first place. In Jesus' day, the rabbis had created myriad rules about binding and nonbinding oaths, which was really just a system to get out of keeping them. Some rabbis taught swearing by Jerusalem was not binding, but swearing toward Jerusalem was. Some taught that swearing by the temple wasn't binding, but swearing by the gold in the temple was. Some distorted Leviticus 19:12 to say that as long as you didn't use God's name in the oath, you were free to break it.

This completely defeated the purpose of oaths. This was just one way the legalistic rule-follower types distorted the whole purpose of the law. The law was meant to make you more honest, but they used it to get away with being dishonest. Like the modern idea of crossing your fingers behind your back. These oaths no longer fostered truthfulness but became a system that let people know when they could or couldn't get away with lying and deception. This was the exact opposite of the purpose of oath-taking and the exact opposite of the character of God, who is truth.⁵

This verse is often taken out of context as a stand-alone verse because it reads like a proverb. As wisdom literature, much of James's letter sounds like proverbs. But this statement was included in its context for a reason. James was talking about persevering through suffering – patiently waiting for Jesus to come back to make all things new and remaining faithful to the Lord no matter what the world throws our way. Keeping your word is a part of perseverance. It is a type of steadfastness. It is part of faithfulness.

When we live like Jesus, there is no need to take an oath to increase our credibility because people will be able to trust our word. When we embody the character of Jesus, we will be trustworthy and reliable; when we say we will do something, no one would ever doubt us. We will have no need to create rules for when we must keep our word and when we can legally get out of it, because we will always want to keep our word. This is one of the trademarks of someone who really knows Jesus. Jesus is the truth; Satan is the father of lies. Those who know Jesus live and walk in truth. They love truth. They do not deceive, manipulate, or lie. They do not need to swear an oath because their very nature embodies truth. Not needing an oath for people to believe you, letting your yes be yes, is a reflection of the nature of God, who always keeps His promises.

Q: How have you seen people try to get out of doing the things they said they would do? When have you found yourself trying to get out of things you said you would do and why?

Q: Why would someone make a promise he or she didn't intend to keep?

Q: How can you grow in trustworthiness so people won't need anything more than your word to trust you will do what you say you will?

Q: Why is it so important for Christians to be trustworthy?

Week 14: James: Perseverance

Took

Main Point: Those who persevere to the end will receive eternal life with Jesus in His kingdom.

Choose to patiently wait on the Lord. Teacher, find a way to take prayer requests, particularly for those who are enduring a challenge and are waiting for the Lord. Choose a passage or two and pray over the requests; consider these below.

1. Isaiah 40:31

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

2. Psalm 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

3. Lamentations 3:25-26

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

4. Romans 8:25

"But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

5. Psalm 37:7

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!"

6. Micah 7:7

"But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

7. Hebrews 10:36

"For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised."

8. Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

9. Romans 12:12

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

10. Isaiah 64:4

"From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him."

CHALLENGES

THINK: Be honest with yourself about your own life. Are you living in such a way that everyone around you trusts you will keep your word? Are you the kind of person people trust and respect? A reliable person they can count on? Do you love truth, walk in truth, and embody truth? Are you happy to keep your promises, or are you always looking for ways to get out of things? Do you reflect the character of God to the world around you?

PRAY for God to give you the strength, perseverance and steadfastness to endure to the end through the suffering and struggle of this world. Ask God to help you wait patiently for His return and use you for His kingdom until then. Thank Him for the glorious inheritance that awaits us in heaven and pray you will be able to keep an eternal perspective as you walk through the ups and downs of this life.

ACT: Help someone who is suffering. As we wait for the Second Coming with patience, we can help one another in our times of suffering and need. Think about someone you know who is struggling or suffering and ask God how you can tangibly help that person this week. How can you bring peace, comfort and the love of Jesus in his or her time of suffering?

¹ <https://financebuzz.com/disney-wait-times-study>

² <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/lightning-lane-passes/lightning-lane-premier/#drawer-card-drawerMagicKingdomPark>

³ https://www.forbes.com/sites/megandubois/2024/10/16/disneyland-and-disney-world-launch-new-skip-the-line-service-lightning-lane-premier-pass/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴ Introduction to James, *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway, 2008).

⁵ D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5–10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999).