

Sermon: **INSIDE / OUT: When Life is Hard and Unfair – James 5:7-12**

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. What experience have you had with planting a garden? What was your 'patience' level like with growing the garden?
2. Who has treated you with patience? What was the situation?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. From the verses of James 5:7-12, how would you describe the life circumstances of the people? What do we know about the society that the Jewish Christians were living in?
How were they impacted by the culture, religion and the political structure of the Roman Empire?
How was it unfair and hard for the poor? (Refer to John 16:33)
2. Pastor Henry says that James implies there are two temptations that challenge those facing hardship and trials. (see summary)
What are they? What remedies does James recommend?
3. Divide into two groups; each reading one of the examples of biblical characters who faced tremendous pain.
Review Job's story in Job 1:1, 21, 22; 2:10; 6:2-13; 13:15; 42:10, 12-17.
Review Joseph's story in Genesis 37:31, 35; 39:2-4, 9, 21; 40:23;
41:39-40; 42:8; 50:19-21.

Describe how each man lived out his responses to hardship and unfair treatment. Support with specific examples from the text.
How can you define 'patience and perseverance' in light of these stories?
How do their experiences illustrate God's purposes in allowing them to face such hardships and trials?

4. What perspectives is James calling forth from his readers when he reminds them about the Lord's coming (v. 7, v. 8) and that 'The Lord is full of compassion and mercy' (v.11)?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. How does Romans 8:28 relate to Pastor Henry's statement, "Patience is believing that while I'm waiting, God is working!"
What personal experience have you had with this?
2. What is the 'main thing' for you from this study?
3. What hardship or trial are you facing right now?
How can the group pray for you?

THE WORD (NIV)

James:7-12

⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as 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.

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

Romans 8:28

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Sermon Study Summary

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). We live in a broken world and as such, we should expect trouble. Some troubles are the result of wrong choices that we make. Other troubles come to us because of selfish and sinful choices that others make. And then, there are troubles that we struggle to understand and make sense of like the sudden death of a loved one or an unexpected job loss or dysfunctional work environment. It is inevitable that all of us will experience times of hardship and unfair treatment throughout our lives.

During the time of James' letter, many people faced unjust and unfair treatment from the rich. Most people were poor. The wealthy not only lived in luxury but also stockpiled more than they needed and they seemed insensitive to the needs of the poor. Last week we learned that James gave three warnings about how wealth can tempt us. First, wealth can tempt us to accumulate more than we need. Second, it can tempt us to live a life of self indulgence. Third, it can tempt us to be insensitive to the needs of others. This is what many of the rich were doing in James' day.

This week Pastor Henry talks about what James has to say to us about how to respond when we face hardship and injustice. James warns us of two temptations we will face. The first temptation is for us to take matters into our own hands; to take our eyes off the Lord and become angry and negative. We become tempted to lower our integrity to the same level as those who take advantage of us. The second temptation we will face is to give up, quit, and walk away. James pleads with people not to give in to these temptations. In James 5:8, he tells us to be patient and to stand firm.

James uses an illustration of the farmer who does what he can do as he plants the seeds and keeps the weeds out. Beyond this, the farmer has to trust God to the rest. The farmer must **be patient** and wait for God to work behind the scene as he sends the rain and provides the conditions for the seeds to sprout and flourish. James stresses the need for those, facing hardship and unfairness, to be patient and trust that Jesus is coming again and that one day God will make all things right. In Psalms 46:10 God says, "Be still and know that I am God". Patience is believing that while I am waiting, God is working.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." We can be assured that God loves us and has our best interest at heart and whether we can see it or not, God uses trials and hardships to accomplish things for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory.

James challenges us to **stand firm**, to **persevere** when we are faced with trials and hardships. (5:10) James looks to Job as an example of an Old Testament character who stood firm and persevered not only in his faith in God but in his conviction that God is good. In a period of two days Job lost his wealth, his family and his health. His friends told him his suffering was his own fault and even his wife told him to curse God and die. In spite of this, Job refused to relinquish his faith in God. (Job 13:15)

Joseph is another good example of someone who stood firm and persevered in the face of hardship and injustice. His brothers sold him into slavery; he ended up in jail for years. As things seemed to go from bad to worse, he stood firm and refused to give up. A phrase that keeps resurfacing in the lives of Old Testament characters is "And the Lord was with Joseph." (Genesis 39:2) Because God was with him and because Joseph stood firm, his faith was deepened and his character was developed enabling him to become the most effective leader in all of Egypt fulfilling the role God had in mind for him.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we too are called by God to play a unique role, however small or significant, in the redemption of the world. How do we respond when confronted with hardship and unfair treatment? Do we quit, get angry, nurse a grudge, or stand firm and persevere? Strong character and faith in God get forged when we persevere even though we feel like giving up.

James encourages us to be patient and to stand firm and persevere. No person or circumstance can frustrate God's purpose for our lives. God sees and knows things we don't. Job's life and Joseph's life teach us that God is far more interested in deepening our character and relationship with Him than He is in elevating our happiness and comfort. What is of ultimate importance is who we are becoming in Him.