

Patience & Prayer

How to Live in Trials

Discovering Practical Christianity (James) Series - Pt. 8

James 5:7-20

Oct 15/16

Introduction

- **Storms in Life** – I just spoke Thursday and Friday at a conference called Altitude at Spring of Life Church in Orangevale. The theme was storms of life. With a predominant Ukrainian and Russian attendance, it was impossible to not refer to the war in Ukraine. That one storm has dominated millions of lives for the last nine months. It was not just those who were in country, but those whose family and friends were in country as well. Now it's spread all through Eastern Europe and is involving the world. The Ukrainian citizens didn't do anything wrong, but they are caught up in something so much bigger than them involving governments where they have no control. Decisions elsewhere have put them in danger. Pastor Alex spoke of his home being near a military base and knowing that at any point a rocket can land on his home, but he has to continue to ministry, continue to live, continue to trust that the Lord will protect his family. It's so scary and he doesn't know the outcome, but he's digging deep and relying on the Lord.
 - **He's not the first and he won't be the last**
- **The Hebrew Boys in Fire** – 2600 years ago in a city named Babylon, in what we now know as the nation of Iraq, a king was on a power trip. He made a huge statue of himself and demanded that all of his subjects bow down to it. Unfortunately, 3 young Hebrew boys, probably teenagers, refused. They were trained to believe that there was only ONE God, Yahweh and they were not to bow down to another, whether man or idol. This enraged the king and he to kill them by throwing them into a raging fire. And what they said is fascinating and has become an inspiration passage for me all my life:
 - **Da 3:16–18** – *“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ **But if not,** be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*
 - **2 Power Statements:** There are two things they said right there that blow my mind:
 1. **Our God is Able to Deliver Us** – They knew confidently that their God was a God of miracles. They knew that His heart was for them. They knew that nothing on earth can stand in God's way or defeat His plans.
 2. **If Not** – They didn't know which way it would go. God could be on the plan to rescue them or He could be on a plan to let them be martyred in their name. They didn't assume on His plans, but they did know that either way, they were not going to compromise. They were going to honor and glorify the Lord's name no matter what.

- **The Great Miracle** - They got thrown in the fire – they could feel the heat. They could feel the fear. But what should have killed them didn't. And there, they found themselves in a burning furnace, waiting. But then...
- **The Great Revelation** – Jesus was there with them in the Trial.
 - **Da 3:24–25** – *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”²⁵ He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”*

God Never Leaves His KIDS Alone in TRIALS

- **Set Up**
 - **James is wrapping up his letter and seems to have one major point he wants to make as he closes along with a couple smaller points.**
 - **The Main Point** – the main point is to be patient for the Lord to work. The book began by telling the church to consider it joy when we face various kinds of challenges and trials in life because God is working in the midst of them. But he also knows that as human beings we tend to get antsy. We want things to wrap up quickly.
 - **The Modern Struggle with Patience** – Impatience is already a human trait. We are born impatient. But in the last 100 years we have fed that impatience by the increasing use of technology that allows life to happen at a faster pace.
 - **Lightbulbs** - When lightbulbs were invented a consumer knew that a businessperson COULD work on their item into the late hours and the expectation of a faster turnaround became realized.
 - **Telephone** - When the telephone was invented, we no longer had to wait to see someone the next day, we could connect with our friends and family immediately.
 - **Cars** - When cars became affordable, we no longer had to wait to get distant errands done, we could just hop in and get it done.
 - **Microwaves and Fast Food** – when microwaves and fast food became a thing, we expect that full meals can be ready in 3 minutes.
 - **Internet** - When the Internet was designed, it brought information from a trillion sources to our fingertips and research became rapid and therefore answers are expected to come faster.
 - **Social Media** - When Social Media took our attention, we saw one story after another recapping how someone went from rags to riches, from pain to healing, from ugly duckling to glow up, from confusion to clarity, and our expectations became unrealistic for ourselves.

Lesson

- **Purposeful Patience**

- **Learning to let God Handle His Business**
 - **James 5:7-8** – *“Be patient¹, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”*
 - **The Lord is Coming Back** – one of the main tenets of Christianity and a non-negotiable is that Jesus Christ will come back for His people. When? No one knows. For the last 2000 years people have thought that it was going to be in their lifetimes, and I’m surrounded by leaders who think the same thing today. I am not convinced. But what I AM convinced of and consider a lock, is that my Jesus will come back to bring His people home.
 - **He’s Sure Taking His Time** – what keeps nagging at people and eroding their trust of this fact and His declaration is that He is taking so long to do it. The Bible writers, the Apostles, Paul, James, all of them thought that Jesus was going to return in the 1st century. But He didn’t. He didn’t show up in the 2nd or the 3rd and the so on. The Church continued to tell people it was imminent and yet here we are thousands of years later still waiting.
 - **James Know the Importance of Patience** – sure, James likely thought that Jesus, his brother, was going to come back really soon. He never would have guessed 2,000 years afterward we would still be reading this and waiting. But he also knew that God is on a different timeframe. His ways are not our ways. His timing is not our timing. He knows what He’s doing. Our job is not to second guess Him, our job is to be patient while He does His work.
 - **Purposeful Patience** – I think there’s a big difference between purposeful patience and empty patience. If we are just sitting and nothing is advancing it seems wrong. But if we are sitting and waiting for an expert to get a job done, it seems valuable and right. We need to always remember that God is at work even when we don’t see Him.
 - **Establish Your Hearts** – to me that means to consistently lock in the faith trusting that what God says is true. I think it means, don’t let your mind wander wherever it wants and don’t let your heart grow troubled. Keep on it and keep it aligned with the Lord. Doubt can’t take root if you don’t let it sit there for a while. Seed takes a bit to sink down. Keep a tight leash on your thoughts.
- **Judging Judges**
 - **A Warning to Stay in Our Lane**
 - **James 5:9** – *“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”*
 - **Trial Temptations** - When we are going through a trial it’s tempting to blame and judge other people for the trial we are in or for making it worse. We get irritated and agitated and we lose our grace and emotional cushion. But it’s critical that we keep it together. Don’t lash out.

¹ Makrothumeo – suffering long, to endure patiently toward people with understanding, and don’t give up faith.

know that He will never abandon us. And so, we wait. He's doing something very important that needs us to be patient.

- **The Lord is Compassionate and Merciful** – the actual translation is 'many bowels of compassion', an extreme kindness.

- **Say It and Leave It**

- **Be Careful with Your Words**

- **James 5:12** – *"But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation."*

- **The Premise** – James has already spent a lot of time talking about the power of the tongue, the power of words to raise up or tear down. He revisits this point.
- **The Point** – we use language to manipulate. We try to alter scenarios by special words that make people think something different. As an example, if we are really trying to get someone to believe us, we will say things like, 'I swear to you on the life of my mother.' The point is that we don't believe that our normal agreements are being trusted or valued so we up the ante. We try to convince the people around us that we really mean it. But what's so fascinating is that if you have to say disclaimers like that, it means your word isn't trustworthy in the first place.
- **The Problem** – the problem is not that we can't tell people what we are going to do or be intense about our commitments. The point is that we don't get to manipulate. Just say what you need to say and leave it. When you start manipulating, it's tempting to drag people into it that DO HAVE credibility, like your mom, or your dad, or...yep, God. And that's where that common phrase came to be, "I swear to God..." What it's doing is manipulating in the name of God and He's not having it.
 - **The Power** – back in the day that James was writing, people, in general, in society, had a much higher view of God. A sweat to God held more weight than it would today in a largely secular and humanistic society.

- **Confession, Prayer and Faith**

- **The Pathways to Healing**

- **James 5:13-16a** – *"Is anyone among you suffering⁴? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed..."*
- **Suffering = More Prayer** – the word here in Greek means any difficulty of any sort. It's very comprehensive. What do we do when we are struggling? We pray

⁴ This word for suffering refers to calamity of every sort.

and pray and pray. Prayer is the lifeblood and lifeline to the Christian. May we all become people who truly believe in the power of prayer.

- **Joy & Happiness = Praise** – Not everyone is suffering or struggling. Some people are doing wonderfully because of the grace, mercy and power of our Heavenly Father. What should we do in that case? Sing songs of praise and have worship in our hearts. So often I wonder how many more prayers God would answer if He were more certain that He would get glory and praise from them instead of people just moving on in silence.
 - **Sickness = Intensified Prayer** – If someone is sick, and it seems to indicate physical sickness, not persecution welts, then they should have the elders pray over the person and anoint the person with oil. That is a type of praying that is intensified. Kind of like the demon that would only come out with prayer AND FASTING? Yeah, like that. The sickness that James had in mind needed people who were saturated in the Lord to pray healing into this person in the Name of Jesus. In a sense there is no wrong way to pray, but in another sense there are ways to pray that are prescribed by the Lord for more effectiveness. This is one of those instructions.
 - **Prayer in Faith** – what does this mean? Praying in faith means that you believe that God can and if it's in His will, He will. Prayer in faith means that you don't see the sickness as bigger than God. It means that you see God as able and loving to do it. Faith got ya to pray in the first place, now build on that.
 - **What's the sin part?** – Jesus healed the paralyzed man that the friends lowered down through the roof, by involving this same dynamic. He said to the man, 'your sins are forgiven.' What do sins have to do with sickness? It was common for the Ancient Jewish people to think that sickness was always tied to sin. But Jesus and other authors/teachers/leaders led otherwise. Nevertheless, there is still some connections in this realm and what we saw with Jesus is that He seeks to deep holistic healing and not just for the physical ailment. What's more important than a fixed back? A saved soul.
 - **Public Confession, Public Prayer and Healing**⁵ – how does this work? Confession and community are powerful. Rarely do we do those together. But the Bible indicates
- **Big Dog Faith**
 - **The Example of Elijah's Faith**
 - **James 5:16b-18** – "...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."¹⁷ *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently*⁶ *that it*

⁵ "In the ancient mind sin and sickness went together, and so confession of sin was necessary if prayer for the sick was to be effective. The confession is to be not only to the elders (or other ministers) but to one another, that is, probably to those they have wronged. But the OT speaks much of the necessity of confession for those who are well, as a private or as a public or national act of repentance, and the rabbis developed quite elaborate formulas for the purpose. The texts cited by the authorities show how the sick man's visitors, the Jewish "guild for visiting the sick,"⁷⁵ swept his room, reminded him to make a will, prayed for him, and habitually exhorted him to confess his sins in the belief that he would be cured: "Great is the power of repentance.... It brings healing." The NT Church, as is shown by 1 John 1:9 and this passage in James, continued the practice: its subsequent history we need not here explore." James Adamson, NICNT Commentary

⁶ "Prayed earnestly—literally "prayed with prayer... C. F. D. Moule points out that it reflects the OT absolute infinitive, which is used in Hebrew "to express emphasis or frequency."... In Hebrew the idiom is said to express not emphasis in the speaker's mouth but intensification in the fact or

might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.”

- **Righteous People** – that’s a bit intimidating. Righteous? To what degree? How righteous do I need to be to be effective in my prayer? Here’s a secret: we got our righteousness from Jesus⁷. It was never on us. No one can be righteous (Rom 3:10) on their own. But that was the deal, Jesus took our broken sinful life and traded his perfect righteous one. We are the righteous people.
 - Ro 5:17–19 – *“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”*
 - **The Story of Shutting on and off the rain** – You can read this story in 1 Kings 17-18, but God used Elijah in a powerful way and the Jews thought of him as the greatest of the prophets.
 - **The Intended Encouragement** – our prayers matter because God says they matter.
- **Rambling Man**
 - **The Blessing of Rescue**
 - **James 5:19-20** – *“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”*
 - **Context (teachers)** – remember James talked about how not many should want not be teachers because they have a stricter judgment? He’s returning to talk to the teachers he was correcting at the beginning. If they do it right and their hearts are good, they can do a world of impact on people for the Kingdom of God.
 - **A Fellow Christian Wandering from the truth** – this is why Christians pastors, preachers and teachers are so important. They motivate and inspire people to cling to God, grow close to God, return to God. The Holy Spirit flows through them with words of life. Christians wander all the time. We all need reminders.
 - **How someone brings someone back** – When a teacher, or any Christian, shares the truth of God in love there is the possibility of transformation and rescue.
 - **The reward for rescue** – the covering of a multitude of sins is both for the person rescued as well as the one who led them back. I think James was hinting that although the leaders of this church had just been publicly rebuked, IF they are

activity he is describing; in Greek the case is the opposite. Here the point is not that Elijah put up a particularly fervent prayer but that praying was precisely what he did... Verse 16 is not calling for “fervent” prayer; but that mistaken notion is probably part of the reason for the common translation “prayed earnestly” in v. 17. We submit the true force of these verses is as follows: “When a righteous man prays, it is very powerful in operation. That is precisely what Elijah did, and that, let me tell you, is how it worked.” James Adamson, NICNT Commentary

⁷ Rom 3:21-26; 8:4; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 4:24; etc.

willing to submit to God and change their tune to love people rightly, then there is going to be a lot of forgiveness for their past failings and God will continue to use them.

Conclusion

- **Recap From the Beginning and the Point of the Book** - This world is full of trials for a variety of reasons. We are going to go through them. But God doesn't leave us alone nor ill-equipped for trials. He knows they are coming and prepares us. Our job is to seek Him, utilize His authority and be patient as He sorts things out. When the dust settles make sure your heart is pure and the trial didn't ruin the deepest part of you.
- **Who needs some strength in a storm today, please stand** – we will cover you in prayer. I know we prayed before but that's the point, we keep praying until there's breakthrough or a clear no from God.