

James 5:7-10

What is the biggest disappointment you've faced recently? Did you fail a test? Did a friend forsake you? Did you miss signing the big deal? Did someone you love break your heart? Sooner or later all of us face disappointments. Things go wrong. They turn out differently than we had planned. Christmas is often a disappointment. Your enthusiasm builds with each party and greeting card. You plan your gifts and family gatherings. But then after the last gift is torn open and the remnants of the turkey are stuffed in the freezer, that thought lingers, "Is this all there is?"

James writes his letter to people who were disappointed. "Isn't believing in Jesus supposed to bring peace and joy? Then why am I ridiculed and persecuted for my faith? Why doesn't Jesus fulfill my dreams? And where is He anyhow? He promised He would return to take us to a glorious heavenly life! Instead, I'm battling another cold winter!" In a world of hurt and disappointment, we have a beautiful Advent message today: **"Be Patient Until the Lord's Coming."**

As we look around, we find so much to disappoint us. Wars are on the horizon. Taxes go higher and higher. The cost of living rises continually, and finally, you reach the point when you exclaim, "What's the use! Why try to keep up?" In the church, we may want to step out with big plans, but others don't share our enthusiasm. "Why put out all that effort when you can't tell whether it will pay off?" Do you ever feel, "No one seems to appreciate my hard work"? Do you ever feel you give and give and give of yourself, and all you get in return is criticism?

Then we look at ourselves. No, we don't often measure up to the expectations others have for us. We maybe failed our parents who dreamed great things for us, and look at how we turned out. We're not part of the "in" crowd. Your old classmates have it made, and you seem left behind.

Then, must we not confess, we are disappointed with our own Christian life. How often don't we fail to resist temptations? How often don't we sense our love for Christ is growing cold? Our worship may grow sterile and formal. Our prayers seem few and far between. Our Bible lies on our shelves, accumulating dust. We no longer get excited about the Lord's work. We drag our feet. We even stand in the way. Have you ever felt, "I'm tired of being good"? I want to be left alone to do as I please for a change!" How disappointing when we think of the enthusiasm, zeal, and zest we once had for life and for the Lord!

How shall we rise above these feelings of disappointment? James writes, **"Be patient, then brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near!"** (v. 7-8) The arid summers would regularly leave the land of Palestine parched and cracked. The farmer had to wait for the autumn rains to soften the soil before he could plow and plant. The spring rains would normally come in March and April to ripen the crop for harvest. Without these rains, the crop is doomed to perish in the heat of summer.

But the farmer cannot schedule the rainfall. He must simply pray, wait, and trust. Christ promised to come again to take us to His glorious home. He promises to provide for us body and soul. He promises to give us His Holy Spirit by the Gospel to keep us in faith, to strengthen us for Christian living, and to support us in time of trial and hardship. Wait patiently, without growing bored, angry, or frustrated. Trust God's gracious plan for your life.

What happens when we're not waiting patiently? We grumble and complain. Therefore James warns, **"Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!"** v. 9: We are so insistent upon our personal rights these days and so used to getting whatever we want, when we want it, that we often grumble whenever life seems unfair to us. Our grumbling may take the form of jealousy. "God, look how good my neighbor has it. Why can't I have what they have?" Our grumbling may be against God, "God, why don't you deliver me from my suffering...right now! God, why don't you make those other people who are hurting me suffer?" We may often feel emotions ranging from despair to anger as we react to things that are wrong and evil in this sin-cursed world, but

our grumbling too is sinful. Wait patiently. Let the Lord be Judge. He will set things straight. He ultimately knows the absolute truth. He will deliver His people to the peace of heaven. He will take His vengeance on those who do not believe. He will also judge those who grumbled and turned away from him in unbelief because they felt he had not dealt fairly with them.

How can we avoid grumbling? **“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.”** Every faithful Old Testament prophet was persecuted, rejected, and faced hostility and unbelief from the people who were supposed to know better. Christ calls us to carry our crosses as we follow Him. But His Word promises, **“God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear”** (1 Corinthians 10:13). So we echo the words of the apostle Paul, **“We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us.”**

A young minister once asked an older minister to pray that he might have more patience. The aged minister knelt and began praying, “God, send trouble and difficulty upon this young man.” The young preacher tapped the older minister on the shoulder and whispered, “You must have misunderstood me. I asked that you would pray that I might have more patience, not more trouble.” The older minister answered, “Remember, the Bible says ‘Suffering produces perseverance.’”

But no amount of suffering can separate us from God’s love. On the cross Jesus died in love for us by taking upon Himself the sin of the whole world. By the cross we are washed, cleansed, and healed. We can live each day in the certainty that we are forgiven of all our sins. Anyone who comes to God through Jesus will never be driven out; will never have the door slammed on him. Faith in Jesus encourages us to face our earthly disappointments and not give up. We may be compelled to endure much pain in a prolonged sickness; we may be imprisoned or exiled; we may be tortured and mutilated, but we shall not perish, for whoever believes in Jesus shall have everlasting life. Eternal life - where God will wipe away all tears and there will be no mourning or crying or death for the old order of things shall have passed away. The treasures of God -- peace with God, the hope of heaven, and the certainty of our salvation -- never spoil, deteriorate, or fade. So we wait patiently in our earthly trials through the faith the Holy Spirit gives us by the Gospel.

What will our lives of faith look like as we now wait patiently? We’ll repent of our sinful nature’s desire for everything to go our way. We’ll trust God’s promise to provide for us one day at a time. We’ll give of our resources, gifts, and abilities to honor our Savior and show Christ’s love to others. When our culture doesn’t understand our faith, when we struggle with our flesh, when we are rejected for being a Christian, we’ll find comfort in going to Jesus through His Word we hear in worship and Bible study. With His love and strength we can face any hardship.

Do you want to share Christ’s joy? He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet for the joy set before Him He endured the cross. Rather than indulging in self-pity, serve others. Whom can you seek to influence with the Gospel through your personal relationships at work, in your community or extended family? Whose joys and sorrows can you share? Shared burdens make them lighter just as shared joys are doubled. When we are serving the Lord and others, we’ll live each day with greater joy and Godly satisfaction. Then we don’t work by the clock, or by the rule of doing one good deed a day, but for the sheer joy of serving our Lord and Savior. Jesus purely out of love and grace has come once to save us. He daily comes to us in His Word and each time we receive His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. Jesus promises to come again in glory and bring us to eternal life in heaven. Be patient as you wait for Him. Amen.