

# Fruit of the Spirit

## Week 4: Patience

James 5:1-11

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- July 2, 2023

### Video Link for Experiment with Kids and Marshmallows

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX\\_oy9614HQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ)

*[In the video, several different children are placed alone in a room seated at a table. At the table is placed one marshmallow. The researcher explains that if they can wait five minutes without eating the marshmallow, at the end of that five minutes they will be given an additional marshmallow to eat. The children show varying levels of patience and self-control.]*

Patience ... wait for it ...

Well, we're going through the fruit of the Spirit as a church together, and today's fruit that we're going to look at is ... yeah ... patience. You can go out in the lobby and wait in line if you want and get one of those stickers. (We have all these stickers to go along with our series.) I got them all because I clearly lack patience and self-control. So, I'm working on those two.

You might also want to get a study guide to go along with it. Here's what we're doing as a church. We're going through a series called the "Fruit of the Spirit." It's in Galatians chapter 5. And each week we're trying to study one fruit. It's the fruit of the Spirit, it's not our fruit, so we have to let the Spirit work in us. The way we've been doing that is going through the study guide together, looking at passages of Scripture that we can memorize and put in our mind and meditate on and put in our hearts. We're looking for opportunities in a regular day, like using our drive time to pray about those truths in the Bible, so that we will align ourselves with the Spirit, and the Spirit will produce and cultivate fruit in us.

When I was looking at passages for patience, boy, it's hard to get away from James chapter 5, verses 7 through 11. If you want, you can turn there and we'll look at it together. It will tell us a lot about patience.

James' audience is suffering persecution from all sides. You have to understand that to understand the passage. They are being persecuted at work, by the government, by the neighbors, by their own family members, because of their life in following Jesus Christ. And even nature—there's a famine in the land, and in light of all the great persecution, they're experiencing great poverty in a difficult time. And it's making it very difficult for them to have hope. It's not easy to have hope. They're losing their hope. And then they've become hard and not giving mercy to their brothers and sisters in Christ. When you lose hope and don't give mercy, there's a word for that. It's impatience.

And in our lives—for you and for me—we can find ourselves in the context of aging parents, or a long-term illness, or a prolonged employment you're tired of, or a prolonged unemployment (you'd love to be employed), or a feeling of everlasting loneliness. Whatever it might be, it can wear us down when it comes to trusting God and learning how to be patient.

And so, James is going to give us a lesson in that. He's going to give us two key words that I want you to know the meaning of before we start reading it, and then one key motivation.

### **Meaning of Patience**

The first word that we need to know about is this; four times in just five verses is the word "patience." And the word "patience" in Greek is actually illustrative to what the word means itself. It's two words combined, and the first word means "far away" or "a long way off." And the second word is the Greek word *thermos*, which means "hot" or "heat" or "passion" or "anger." So, the words combined mean "a long anger"—a long time to get upset.

There was a figure of speech back then—they would say "it takes a long time to boil." We would say "We have a long fuse." That's how we would use the word "patience." For person who's impatient, we would say, "That guy has a short fuse."

So, in the context of biblical patience, it is the ability to wait a long time for God to do what He will do.

## Meaning of Perseverance

The second word that's going to be used two times is the word "perseverance." Again, it's almost an identical twin to "patience", but it's not as much waiting, which is kind of passive. It's more active. And the word means "to suffer under", or "to endure pressure." So, it's carrying a heavy load for a long distance, for example. They both require great stamina. One is waiting and one is persevering.

## The Lord Is Soon to Return

How does a person do that? James is going to use one motivation, but he's going to say it three times. He's going to say, "The Lord is soon to return."

Now what you think about God is the most important thing about you. We say that a fair amount around here. What you believe about God is the most important thing about you. In the context of believing in God, it means having faith in the nature of God and the promises of God. And certainly, in the subject matter that we're going to be looking at today in patience, when the people heard the phrase (in the Bible, Old and New Testament both) "The Lord is soon to return," this is where they put their hope. This is what they're trusting in. They're trusting in God's ultimate victory that brings absolute justice. They're trusting in God's (Yahweh's) ultimate victory that brings absolute justice. And absolute justice means this: that everyone will give an account for their life choices, and that it is the nature of God and the promises of God that He will reward the faithful. That's what justice means.

And so, what you think about God is the most important thing about you. And the fact that the Lord is coming means that justice will prevail and all of the suffering that you endure for following Christ will be worth it. It's going to pay off well. And so, faith in that truth of what ultimate victory means and absolute justice—faith in that will make you a patient person.

Not believing in that is going to make you impatient.

Let me say it another way specifically. What you believe about the return of Jesus Christ is the primary factor in your patience. What you deeply believe about the imminent return of Jesus Christ is the most important factor in your patience.

### **James 1:12**

**Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

Look how James says this in the first chapter. He's going to tell us more about it in the fifth chapter, but in chapter 1 he says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he's been approved, he will receive the crown of life"—there's that reward—"which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

### **James 5:7-11**

**Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup> You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. <sup>9</sup> Do not complain, brothers and sisters, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.**

**<sup>10</sup> As an example, brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**

**<sup>11</sup> Behold, we count those blessed who persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**

So, with that in mind, those words and what it means, let's look at our passage today in chapter 5, verses 7 through 11. James says this: "Be patient, therefore, my brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and the late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brothers and sisters, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the judge is standing at the door. As an example, brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name

of the Lord. Behold, we count those blessed who persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”

## **Three Ways to Live a Life of Patience and Perseverance**

So, in this section James is going to give us three ways to live a life of patience and perseverance. He’s going to give us three ways to live victoriously and glorify God.

### **1. Live Hopefully in God’s Sovereign Plan**

The first one is this: that we live hopefully in God’s sovereign plan. We are to live hopefully in God’s sovereign plan.

#### **James 5:7a**

**Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord.**

Look what he says in verse 7: “Now be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters”—why?—“until the coming of the Lord.”

#### **James 5:7b**

**Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.**

And then he says, *Okay, look, I know that’s a hard concept. Let me explain and illustrate what this looks like.* “Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of his soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and the late rains.”

James is helping us understand how to wait on the Lord and let the Lord God do what He will do by saying, *Look, you had to learn to be patient with nature. You had to learn to wait for*

*what is supposed to happen next. To say it another way, You cannot hurry nature's plan. You can't be impatient about it.* And so, the farmer has to learn to hope in the promise of this precious produce that's coming at the harvest time. And he has to do this every year. Every year he's got to trust that that harvest comes after that second rain. You can't get impatient. In December there's nothing happening. It's just still dirt. That's all you see.

He's saying, *You've learned how to do that in farming. You have to learn to do that with God Almighty. You have to learn to be patient. You have to learn to be waiting upon Him. Because just like you can't hurry nature's plan, you can't hurry God's plan.*

So, patience is having this long fuse towards God, His plan, and towards other people. And you're just waiting for God to do what He will do.

An impatient farmer is bitter, angry, probably broke. But he's kind of dumb. Is it like he's never seen this before? Is he going to plow up between the first rain and the second rain? No. Because he can't hurry nature. He has to trust that after that first rain, during the winter months when it just looks like death, spring will follow. And did you know that spring follows every single winter? Sure, okay. You had to learn to trust that way? God's that trustworthy as well.

### **James 5:8**

**You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

Look what he says in verse 8: "Therefore be patient; strengthen your hearts." Why? "Because the coming of the Lord is at hand." Why be patient? Twice he says because of the coming of the Lord. And now he's saying that the coming of the Lord is at hand. It's going to happen fast. James is looking forward to the Book of Revelation. It hadn't been written yet, but we know it. We love that book! Do you know what the theme of Revelation is? Yahweh God's ultimate victory. And that victory means that perfect justice will be distributed. Everyone will give an account and rewards will be given. It's His nature to do that, and He's promised it. Your patience is based upon your belief and trust in the imminent return of Jesus.

**Patience must be rooted in an overarching confidence that there is someone in control of the universe, our world, our life. We need to know and trust that God does work things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.**

**--- Lloyd Ogilvie**

Lloyd Ogilvie was the chaplain for the U. S. Senate for many years. He was a gifted communicator. And he said this: “Patience must be rooted in an overarching confidence that there is someone in control of the universe, our world, our life. We need to know and trust that God does work things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.”

A patient person knows the shortness of time and the link of eternity. Patience is really faith in action.

Super scholar of the Old Testament Bruce Watke said that faith is waiting. So, when we’re feeling impatient because of the prolonged suffering, we might be experiencing all the injustices going on all around us. James says, *You’ve got to think like a farmer.*

In our own personal experience—we don’t have a lot of farmers in the room, but some of us have yards—last winter—boy, was it brutal! The ice storm, all the oak trees, right? And then there was this time when it was cloudy all the time—*There’s nothing but death!* And then this spring was magic. It seemed to be more colorful than ever before. My yard has never looked better—the sun can finally hit the thing. The point is that every winter is followed by a spring. He’s saying, *Let’s go back to that. Do everything you can*—he’s not taking justice away from it—*do everything you can*—we all owe due diligence to our fellow men for justice and for peace—but ultimate justice and ultimate peace is not in our hands. It’s in the hands of God, and He has promised an ultimate victory with absolute justice and reward.

**James 5:7 “...until the coming of the Lord.”**

**James 5:8 “...the coming of the Lord is at hand.”**

Look how he’s saying it’s going to happen sooner than we think. Look at verse 7: “...until the coming of the Lord.” Verse 8, the next sentence: “...the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Patience is trusting in the nature of God and the promises of God just a little bit longer. It’s right there. We’re waiting for God to do what He has promised to do.

**James 5:9**

**Do not complain, brothers and sisters, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.**

And James says, *Look for signs of impatience in your life.* The next sentence, verse 9, he says this: “Do not complain, brothers and sisters, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged.” Why? “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”

Sometimes our impatience with God’s timing causes us to be impatient with other people. Sometimes other people just try our patience. That’s how we get impatient with people. But if you remember the audience to whom James is writing, they’re persecuted in multiple avenues. And then, all the while, they’re impoverished. And it is much like us, so that James doesn’t say, *Look, don’t grumble against the government and the people and the neighbors persecuting you.* He’s saying, *No, don’t grumble against your brothers and sisters in Christ.* And he says that because when we’re in the vise of pressure, when things are not going the way we think that a just and holy God should act, when we’re living in the context of that injustice and difficult times, like a famine, we don’t take it out on the people doing it, quite often. We take it out on the people we love most. We come home and we kick the cat or take it out on our children and our family.

We have a saying from when our children were younger and I would bring a lot of stuff home, in the context of that vice. Melinda or I would say, “Same team!” *Same team*—and it’s just kind of a slap. *Wait a minute ... why are we turning on each other in the difficult times of*

*life? When we ought to be most patient with the people we love the most, why are we expressing ourselves this way?*

We've got to be patient with one another. We need to give mercy. Don't be complaining and sniping at other people in the church.

What you deeply believe about the return of Jesus Christ is the most important factor in having patience. Listen to the progression now that he's added—the progression of the importance of Jesus' return. He says in verse 7, "... until the coming of the Lord." And then he says in verse 8, "... the coming of the Lord is at hand." And then in verse 9, he says, "...the Judge is right outside that door." Impatience is acting like there is no justice, or that there will be no justice.

We can see that all around us. We can look at various cities around the country where the politicians have decided to no longer implement the law. For example, shoplifting. You see these videos where people are just going into stores with bags and just clearing the shelves with what they want and just walking out, stealing purses or whatever. It's a matter of time, because there is no justice and people live as though there will be no justice. And those cities are destroyed from the inside out. And it's enraging.

It's happened a couple of times for me because the people who do this do this with impunity and boldness. I was at a Home Depot where a guy just carried out a rack of cordless drills. And people are yelling at him, "Hey, you didn't pay for those!" And he jumps in his truck and drives away. I followed him out—I was so angry. And then recently (I'm not bragging about this—I'm upset with myself) I was coming out of a Walgreen's and someone stole something and the manager was yelling at him, and I said, "Hey, man, come on! How dare you just walk in there and grab it and walk out? You can't do that!" He said, "What are you going to do?" *There's no justice. I can live in a lawless way because there's no judge.* I finally calmed down because it wasn't my stuff and all that, but the point was that I was so angry at the arrogance and the impunity and his daring to break the law.

And then just this past week in a premeditated way I went against God's will and did something I shouldn't have done. And I heard those words that I yelled at that guy. *How dare you, Matt, living as though the Judge were not at the door? You're living like there's not a return of Christ. And there's not absolute justice and giving an account. There's the Judge at the door. You should live that way.*

## 2. Live Courageously for His Promise of Reward

So, James says to live hopefully. And the second way he tells us to live is to live courageously. He says, *Live courageously for the promise of reward. It's going to be worth it.* And in this storyline, he's going to give us a great example of patience by going back to the old saints that we know about and what they did and how they lived courageously. It paid off.

### **James 5:10**

**As an example, my brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**

Verse 10 says, “As an example, my brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” And how did they live patiently? They lived courageously. Because God didn't commission these men and women to go out and win friends and influence people. They weren't necessarily popular. In other words, a lot of these saints were told by God to do things that caused them to suffer great persecution, sometimes illness and even death. And so, James is kind of doing what we see in Hebrews chapter 11. He's saying, *Look at those old saints, like athletes that we look up to.* And we see all that they paid for the ability to be in the Olympics, for example, and how that paid off. Sometimes it didn't look like it won, but it was all worth it to them.

It says in Hebrews chapter 11, “We're surrounded by these saints, and some of them conquered kingdoms, some of them obtained the promises that God gave them.” But then at length it says, “Some of them experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, even also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword.” And the point of chapter 11 is that it was all worth it. It all made sense at the end. In other words, there's no sacrifice in living in faith, waiting for God to do what He does. There's no sacrifice in that, because every cost has a greater return. Every cost is really just an investment. And that investment has a huge eternal reward.

So, look how James is teaching. Step back and look how he's teaching. What he's saying is, *Just remember how God worked in your life before.* He's saying, *Look back when we're confused, when we're tired. When we're starting to act cowardly, when we're in the fog of war, we want to become impatient, we want to give up.* He says, *Look at farming—you know that. Farmers say it's worth it—their precious produce is worth waiting for after that second rain. Look at those old saints—they suffered long. They lived bold and courageous lives, and it was worth it. They were heroes.*

And he's saying to us, *What about you? What about me? Look back. Carve in stone the God moments in your life where you waited on God and He provided and protected in ways so that you ended up with this beautiful God story, because you waited for God to do what He does.*

And I would recommend you make it like folklore. We do that at our house. We just turn it into the lore of the way we live. Big purchases like houses and cars and employment—those sorts of things—I want a God story. I'm going to wait for the very end of this. This is going to be part of the things we remember, so that later on when we're tired and confused and concussed, we just go back to muscle memory. We go into that trophy room of God's provision and protection when we waited. God has done this before. He will do it again. Perseverance is worth it. It's worth it. When you get home to heaven it will all make sense. And it will all be worth it.

There's a beautiful story that's inspirational called *The Rabbit-Proof Fence*. It's been made into a movie. It's about these three girls in Australia. The era is 1931 and they are fourteen- and ten- and eight-year-old girls. And they are torn from their grandmother's arms in their little village and taken about 1,200 miles away. Because back then Australia had a law that if you were of mixed race, particularly with the Aborigines, you were taken out of that community and put into a residential school to be taught how to become an Australian. And those schools were known for their brutality and shame and abuse and literal deprivation.

And these three girls were able to escape somehow. And the only way to get home was to follow the rabbit-proof fence. It's 1,500 miles. It's a very difficult hike. And if you can imagine sending your three daughters to walk to Los Angeles, then they would still have 300 more miles to go.

I love what Mark Buchanan writes about the story about following that fence line and making it all worth it. He said this: "The journey was Homeric in its proportions. The trudge was through a blistering desert, evading wild animals and trackers and police, surviving on food that

they scavenged. They return, nine months later, to a joyful reunion with their family.” They were home.

Watch this. “The oldest daughter, Molly, much later, becomes a mother and is pregnant. And she’s taken from the village again and taken back to that residential school. She escapes, but now with two toddlers.” But she’d done it once before. And she followed the rabbit-proof fence and made it back home again.

He writes this: “And the journey that was dangerous and difficult, that long and arduous, only makes sense if the road leads home. Molly and Daisy, two of the three girls, reflected back when they were older, and they decided they would anything—they would do everything—all over again to just get home.” When they got home it was worth it.

And James is saying, *We’re going to be home soon ... very soon. Don’t grow impatient. Endure suffering. You’ll be home soon. And when you’re home, it will be worth it.*

There’s a prize for the punishment. I think one of the more difficult things that we have to endure in the context of patience is when we feel like the pain has no purpose. And the Bible says that’s not the case. The pain does have a purpose. Remember how God worked in the past. You can count on that, as sure as the seasons are; as certain as the saints of old and how we’ve turned them into heroes, and rightly so.

And even in our own lives---the funerals we attend. Honestly, one of the weird, strange blessings that I get from working here is that I attend a lot of funerals. And because of the nature of our church, we get to watch saints finish all the way to the end, and do it in such a righteous, holy, patient, persevering way. It’s inspirational. If they’re living in this time and they can live hopefully and courageously, so can I.

### **3. Live Victoriously Because of God’s Nature**

James says this—not just hopefully and courageously, but victoriously. Live victoriously because of God’s nature.

## **James 5:11**

**Behold, we count those blessed who persevere. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**

Watch in this section here how he's not appealing to the promises of God, but to the very attributes of God. He says, "Behold, we count those blessed who persevere. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings." And what was that outcome? "The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful."

Job suffered victoriously. And when we talk about Job suffering it's an icon of suffering. He suffered financially, he suffered physically. He suffered demonically. The whole thing was orchestrated by a demon. His family—he lost all of his children. He had nothing to show for his life. And yet in the middle of it in Job chapter 19, he says, "I know my Redeemer lives." He's persevering through all of that. He expresses his emotions quite vividly, but he says, "I know my Redeemer lives."

And the story is written in a way to show this—the nature of God. It's written to show this: that He is filled with compassion and mercy. Job lived victoriously because of the compassion and the mercy of God. It ends by saying, "The Lord brought in his life twice as much as he had before."

What we believe about the return of Jesus Christ is the most important factor in our ability to be patient. He's going to return. His return is at hand. The Judge is at the door. That will give us patience. We know how it ends, so we can live in the present with that.

Tim Keller does a beautiful job of illustrating this. He paints this little picture where he says this. If you can imagine two women as identical as can be—same education, same socioeconomic background, same temperament, same age—everything is the same. And then you give them the same exact job in a menial assembly line type of job. They're going to work hard in this factory eight to ten hours a day. And they're sitting right next to each other. Everything is absolutely the same. The job is boring—it's even belittling, and you could probably train a monkey to do what they're doing. And it's hard work.

Now the only difference between them is that woman number one is promised at the end of the year \$30,000. And woman number two is promised \$30,000,000. Eight weeks in, what do you expect? Two months later, woman number one is saying, “This is tedious work. It is driving me absolutely insane. I’ll never make a year. I can’t wait to quit.” Growing impatience.

Woman number two? “I think this is perfectly acceptable. You might have noticed that I whistle while I work.”

Why? Expectations of the future. Expectations of the future control how we experience the present.

What you believe about God is the most important thing about you. And know this about Yahweh—trust this about Yahweh: there will be ultimate justice. And that means that everyone will give an account. Be sure of that. And it is the nature of God, and He’s promised it to be true that we will receive a reward. We will receive an eternal reward for a temporal choice to be patient and to persevere.

So, patience is really just keeping the end in mind and working backwards from there; having faith in the nature and the promises of God.

**1 Thessalonians 3:13**

**May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.**

Look what it says in Thessalonians. Paul writes it this way: “May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.”

Jesus never said the suffering was going to be easy. But when He mentioned it He said it would be worth it. And so, we’re to live patiently and we’re to endure suffering because the Lord is coming, the Lord’s coming is at hand, the Judge is just right outside that door. And that means there will be a victory. That means justice will prevail. It means rewards will be given. Be patient. Just wait.

Let’s pray.

*Lord, impatience is part of our culture. We don't know how to live any other way. Efficiency is like a sign of holiness. But not with You. I confess that, Lord.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You would help us understand what it means to believe in You, Your nature, and Your promises, and live in the way that Old Testament saints lived for the coming of Christ and all those promises. And we know that to be true. And now we need to live for the second coming of Christ in that same way. In the same way that You came in the first coming, You will definitely come in the second, and we must live patiently with perseverance until that day.*

*Lord, I'd ask that You would help us. Just remind us of ways we live when we're living as if there is no judge at the door; when we live lawlessly as though You're not keeping score, that we won't give account; and when we doubt that You will reward our perseverance and our patience.*

*"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, for once he's been approved he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose." God, help us be a church of patience. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.*