

James – Life after Faith

James 5:7-9

“Living While Looking For the Lord”

**1. HIS COMING SHOULD INSURE YOUR RESOLVE**

A. The promise we affirm

B. The process we accept

**2. HIS COMING SHOULD INSPIRE YOUR READINESS**

A. There is no time to waver

B. There is no time to waste

**3. HIS COMING SHOULD INFLUENCE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS**

A. The attitude we must resist

B. The appointment we must remember

1. Multitasking is one of our modern buzzwords. Our society seems to put a prize on the ability to do more than one thing at a time.

2. If there were a multitasking Olympics, University of Texas freshman, Lauren Moore would be the gold medalist.

3. Lauren can recite the first 100 digits of the mathematical constant pi, while solving a Rubik's cube, while balancing 15 books on her head. Recently, she performed her multitasking marvel on one of the national, day-time talk shows.<sup>i</sup>

4. Whenever I try to do more than one thing at a time, I usually become more of a multi-slacker than a multi-tasker. So, if you see me driving with my cell phone up to my ear, watch out!

5. In some ways, the Christian life requires a bit of multitasking. We are called to live a certain kind of life down here, while also looking for the life that is to come.

6. In Titus 2:12 and 13, Paul describes this Christian multitasking. He says, *“...we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

8. Twice in James chapter 5, in verses 7 and 8, Bro. James refers to “the coming of the Lord”. He uses that prophetic event as a motivation for living in this present world.

9. As we examine what James had to say to the believers in the first century, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts about the effect the coming of the Lord ought to have on how we live today.

10. What does it mean to you and me that Jesus is coming back? Notice with me some things that the truth of our Lord's return ought to do to those of us who know Him. First of all:

## I. HIS COMING SHOULD INSURE YOUR RESOLVE

1. Throughout this book it has been clear that Christians to whom James originally wrote were living in a difficult day. They were experiencing “diverse temptations” and the “trying of their faith” (1:2-3).
2. A preacher by the name of Kent Hughes said, “James’ scattered Jewish church was being kicked around the Mediterranean like a soccer ball.”<sup>ii</sup>
3. To those abused and afflicted believers, Bro. James writes in verse 7, and says, “*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord...*”
4. As they looked forward to the coming of Christ, they were encouraged to hold on and hold out in spite of all they were facing.
5. Likewise, no matter how hard our days may be, we can resolve to endure them, knowing that they are not forever, because Jesus is coming!
6. Look at the patient resolve James encourages in light of our Lord’s return. Notice first of all that he reminds us of:

### A. The promise we affirm

1. James says, “*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord...*” He speaks about the coming of the Lord as if it were a given thing. He does not seek to defend it. He just declares it to be so.
2. That has long been the position of God’s people. We call the return of Christ “the Blessed Hope”, but that is not because we are just “hoping” He will return. We *know* He is coming back!
3. In Acts 1, two angels appeared to those wide-eyed disciples who had just watched Jesus ride a cloud back up into heaven. The angels said to them, “... *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*”
4. We affirm that promise to be true! We believe that Jesus is in fact coming back to earth one day.
5. The New Testament contains over 300 references to the return of Christ. That comes out to one out of every thirteen verses.
6. An old Puritan preacher named John Trapp said, “This is pinned as a badge to the sleeve of every true believer – that he looks for and longs for Christ’s coming...”<sup>iii</sup>

7. You may not understand everything that is going on now. You may not know all that you will face tomorrow.

8. However, regardless of what today or tomorrow may bring, we have a promise that someday Jesus is coming, and that gives strength to our hearts!

9. James reminds us here, not only of the promise we affirm, but notice also that he points us to:

### **B. The process we accept**

1. Again, James says in verse 7, *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord...”* Notice that word “patient”. James has talked already about patience in the opening chapter. He said in chapter 1, verse 3, *“...the trying of your faith worketh **patience**.”*

2. However, here in chapter 5, James uses a different word than the one we found in chapter 1. The word here is from a compound of two words, and it literally means “long-tempered”. We might say “longsuffering”.

3. The idea of the word is a calm control over ones temper or spirit. James illustrates it in our text in verse 7, with the picture of a farmer.

4. He says, *“Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.”*

5. There was very little rain in Palestine. In fact, there were two main rainfalls – the early and late rain. One prepared the ground for planting. The other prepared the crops for harvest.

6. James says, “No matter how eager or anxious the farmer is to get his crop, he has to wait until the process of planting, watering, and growth has taken place before he can get the reward of his field.”

7. In much the same way, God doesn’t save us and then instantly take us home to heaven. There is a process through which God plants His Spirit in our hearts, and then through the years and tears of life, He grows the image of His Son in us until we are ready to meet Him face to face.

8. Though the process may be hard, it is nonetheless valuable. Therefore, we must be long-suffering, patiently resolved that we are going to live for the Lord until He comes.

9. Several years ago, during a Monday Night Football game, an announcer made the point that Bears running back, Walter Payton had accumulated over 9 miles

of rushing yards over his career. The other commentator added, "Yeah, and that's with someone knocking him down every 4.6 yards."

10. Bro. James teaches us that no matter how often you get knocked down, you can keep going if your resolve is insured by the coming of the Lord. Notice a second effect His coming should have upon us. Not only should it insure your resolve, but notice also that:

## **II. HIS COMING SHOULD INSPIRE YOUR READINESS**

1. In verse 7, James sets the coming of the Lord as the goal line for these struggling saints. In verse 8, he assures them that the goal line is not far away.

2. He says, "*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*" Throughout the Scriptures, the coming of the Lord is presented as being close at hand.

3. Bro. James is no exception. Writing as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, he says, "*...the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*"

4. If it was drawing near 2,000 years ago, how close must it be now? The reality is; all the years that have passed should not cause us to wonder skeptically about His coming. They should instead cause us to watch seriously for it.

5. We need to be ready to meet Jesus. James reminds us of a couple truths regarding our readiness. First of all:

### **A. There is no time to waver**

1. Look again at verse 8. James says, "*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts...*" Mark that word "stablish". It is translated from a word that means to set something firmly, or to fix it in place.

2. It is the same word used in Luke 9:51, where it says of Jesus that "*he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" He fixed his face to go to the cross. In other words, He had made up His mind, and could not be persuaded otherwise.

3. This is what James is calling for in verse 8. He is saying, "Get it settled, and set your hearts firmly on living for Christ until He comes."

4. Unfortunately, ours is the day of flip-flop, wishy-washy, up and down, in and out, flaky, flimsy Christians. One day, they seem ready to single-handedly usher in the kingdom. The next day, they can't even find their Bible.

5. What we need is to be reminded that everyday brings us that much closer to the return of our Lord. We are closer than any generation previous to ours, and this is no time for a hesitant, half-hearted faith.

6. On June 18, 1940, Sir Winston Churchill delivered one of the greatest speeches ever given by a political figure. Nazi Germany was surging, Paris had fallen, and England seemed to be next.

7. Churchill delivered his speech to the House of Commons, and it was broadcasted over the radio as all England anxiously listened. Many consider the speech to have been decisive in the turning of the war. The last line of the speech is probably the best. Churchill said:

“Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour’.”

8. Considering how close we as the Church of Jesus Christ are to His return, we ought to “brace ourselves to our duties”, establishing our hearts so that this would be the church’s finest hour.

9. We should be ready for Jesus to come, and there is not time to waver. Looking at verse 8, I would add also that:

### **B. There is no time to waste**

1. Again, James confidently asserts in verse 8, “...*the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*” The phrase “draweth nigh” is translated from a word that describes something that is already close.

2. The idea is that the coming of the Lord is so close that it could happen at any moment. It is not some distant day. It could be today!

3. The Word of God speaks to us with even more urgency than when it was originally written, and it shouts to us, “Be ready! It is here! He is coming sooner than you think!”

4. With that in mind, we cannot afford to stroll through life, thinking little of Christ or His kingdom. There is no time to waste on that which is worthless in eternity!

5. Several years ago a survey was conducted in which American workers confessed to wasting just over two hours a day while on their job. The internet was the number one culprit, with 44% of the people saying they wasted time on the web while on the clock.

6. The survey calculated that the wasted time cost U.S. companies \$759 Billion a year in salaries for slacker hours.<sup>iv</sup>

7. While the cost of wasted time is massive on our economy, consider how much more significant is the cost of wasted time on the Kingdom of Christ! Think of those who could have heard the gospel, but have not because we have wasted time.

8. If, as James suggests, the coming of the Lord is close at hand, then we have no time to waste. We must be busy with the kingdom, and ready for the King!

*He's coming back, the Scriptures say,  
Don't live as if its not today,  
It will be soon, maybe now,  
Don't take your hand off the plow!*

9. According to Bro. James, the coming of our Lord is close. With that in mind, *his coming should insure your resolve*. Likewise, *his coming should inspire your readiness*. Consider a third effect his coming should have upon you. It is this:

### **III. HIS COMING SHOULD INFLUENCE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Once again, James demonstrates that he is a preacher of the practical. He points us to the lofty truth of Christ's return, and then relates it to the facts of where we live every, single day.

2. Notice verse 9. James says, "*Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*"

3. Rather than leading us in a chorus of "What a day that will be," James points us to what a day *this* should be, and how we should get along with one another until Jesus *does* return.

4. Notice the practical influence the coming of Christ should have upon our relationships with one another. First of all, James reminds us of:

#### **A. The attitude we must resist**

1. In verse 9, James says, "*Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned...*" Notice that phrase, "Grudge not one against another". The ESV translates it, "*Do not grumble against one another...*"

2. The word translated "grudge not" literally means to groan or to sigh. It speaks of griping or complaining that is kept on the inside.

3. Remember the context. These people to whom James wrote were living in difficult days. Many of them were being persecuted and oppressed.
4. Under the weight of their struggles, they had become irritated with one another, and some of them were grumbling to themselves about their brothers and sisters in Christ.
5. Why? Well, why do you take it out on your family when you've had a bad day at work? Why is it that we lash out at those closest to us when our problems really have little to do with them?
6. I don't know why we get this way, but James says, "Don't let your troubles cause you to gripe and grumble against one another." It is a good piece of practical advice.
7. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Ephesians 6:12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*
8. Look around you. No one here is your enemy! Don't let the difficulties of your life sour your spirit toward your brothers and sisters in Christ!
9. I can remember being cooped up with my two brothers in the back seat of the family sedan when we would go on vacation.
10. The first 100 miles or so were fine. However, after a few hours of sitting beside those two mouth-breathers, there would inevitably be some sort of fight.
11. Some of the conflict in the church is merely the product of people who lose their patience with their family on the long journey home.
12. James warns us about this, saying, "Don't gripe and grumble about one another, *'lest ye be condemned'*". That points us to a further bearing the coming of the Lord should have on our relationships. Notice not only the attitude we must resist, but notice also further, we see here:

### **B. The appointment we must remember**

1. In verse 9, Bro. James makes another of his trademark sobering statements. He says, *"...behold, the judge standeth before the door."*
2. The coming of the Lord is a comforting thought for the believer. At the same time, there is also a sense in which the coming of the Lord is a convicting thought as well.

3. In Romans 14:10, Paul said, “...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” This is what James is referring to in our text.
4. As you live in this world, and as you look for the Lord Jesus to come, every step you take ought to be guided by the reality that you are going to answer to the Lord Jesus for what you have done with the life He has given you.
5. The Judge is standing at the door, ready to enter the hall of judgment. Your name is somewhere on the court docket. You have an appointment in the presence of Judge Jesus.
6. With that in mind, you don’t want to stand before Him who has forgiven you of all your sins, while holding on to some petty grudge or gripe against one of your fellow defendants.
7. The legal advice of Bro. James is this, “Let it go! Before you meet the judge, whatever you are holding against your brother, let it go, for Christ’s sake!”
8. Some of the strangest things I have ever witnessed as a pastor happened at funerals. Funeral homes are like full moons, they cause crazy things to happen.
9. Unfortunately, I’ve seen too many funerals where the tension was as thick as the smell of the flowers. I’ve seen families at each other throat; fighting and bickering when they ought to be comforting one another.
10. I have often wanted to say, “This is no time for fighting. Your loved one would be so disappointed if they knew how you were acting.”
11. In verse 9, James says, “This is no time for fighting. Your beloved Lord and your Judge is standing at the door. He knows how you’re acting.”

1. Our Baptist ancestors were known as Anabaptists. They were among the first, following the reformation, to reject the notion of infant baptism.
2. As a result of their stand against what was the normal practice of the church at that time, many of the Anabaptists were persecuted, imprisoned, and some of them were even martyred.
3. Writing about their struggle, W.R. Estep said this: “Their eschatology saved them from utter despair.”<sup>v</sup> In other words, it was their belief about the future, and the return of Christ that enabled them to persevere through their difficulties.

4. In a way, that is what the Spirit is saying to us through James 5:7-9. Our eschatology (what we believe about things to come) is what gives us strength to live in the present.
5. As we live day by day, looking for Jesus to come any day, His coming insures our resolve, inspires our readiness, and influence our relationships.
6. We look forward to that day, and say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

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<sup>i</sup> Hodge, Destinee, Student sets multitasking record, 4/12/10, *dailytexanonline*, accessed 4/15/10, <http://dailytexanonline.com/content/student-sets-multitasking-record>

<sup>ii</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, James: Faith that Works, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1991), p. 222

<sup>iii</sup> Blanchard, John, Truth for Life, (Evangelical Press, Darlington, England, 1986), p. 341

<sup>iv</sup> AMERICANS WASTE MORE THAN 2 HOURS A DAY AT WORK, COSTING COMPANIES \$759 BILLION A YEAR, ACCORDING TO SALARY.COM AND AMERICA ONLINE SURVEY, 7/11/05, *salary.com*, accessed 4/17/10, [http://www.salary.com/aboutus/layoutscripts/abtl\\_default.asp?tab=abt&cat=cat012&ser=ser041&part=Par485](http://www.salary.com/aboutus/layoutscripts/abtl_default.asp?tab=abt&cat=cat012&ser=ser041&part=Par485)

<sup>v</sup> Morgan, Robert J., Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2000), p. 685