

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- 24th September 2023

TITLE: "The faith of patience"

SERIES "Living by Faith Pt 2"

TEXT: James 5 verses 1-18

Scripture references from the ESV

James 5:1-18 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

⁷**Be patient, 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. ⁸You also, be patient.** Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. ¹²But 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. ¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴Is 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. ¹⁵And 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. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit

Growing vegetables or flowers from seed takes time, and we cannot guarantee the results. If the celebration of Harvest teaches us anything, it is that we need to be patient. We need not just the patience to wait for things to grow, but the patience to accept

when things don't turn out how we planned or at the time we planned. James uses harvest to show this in his letter to believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire (vv7-8a above). The farmer sows his seed, but does not get instant results. In all of it, he is dependent on God to send the right weather, and there are years when harvest doesn't go as he planned. James tells us we also must be patient. For believers, patience is not optional.

In his book *Battling Unbelief*, John Piper defines patience thus:

Waiting with God

in the unplanned place of obedience and at the unplanned pace of obedience.

It doesn't matter how old you are, what your gender or social background is, there will always be times when you find yourself in places that don't fit with your plan and moving at a pace that doesn't fit with your timing. However,

Just because it is not according to your plan does not mean that it is ultimately unplanned.

Patience is something that affects us all. We might find that our unplanned place and unplanned pace is

- Health issues, when we are older, and the frustration of not being able to do what we used to do.
- Finding, when you are middle-aged, that all the dreams you had when you were younger are not being fulfilled
- Feeling, when you are young, that everything must be done by the age of 30 or life will have left you behind
- Wondering, if you are single, whether Mr or Mrs Right will ever come along
- When you are married, the patience needed when Mr or Mrs Right doesn't seem to be so right after all.
- When children come along, being in the unplanned place at the unplanned pace takes on a whole new meaning!

As Christians, we may well have thought that God would deal with our sin overnight, but as we go on in our walk with the Lord, we discover that he takes a whole lifetime to change us, and those around us.

Some unplanned places and unplanned paces are more serious than the everyday situations that require patience. As well as waiting in queues or at traffic lights, we may find ourselves waiting for unplanned damaged relationships to be restored, health issues to be resolved or work difficulties to be changed.

- We all have to exercise patience, but how do we obey the command of God to wait in the unplanned place of obedience and at the unplanned pace of obedience?

The Psalmist shows us the way: **I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.** (Psalm 130:5)

We saw in the first sermon in this series that change happens as we live by faith in Jesus Christ. In **Galatians 2:20**, Paul tells us: **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

If we are believers in Christ, we have been united to him by faith so that when he died, we died with him, and he lives his resurrected life in us.

The new life of Christ in us is lived out in our everyday lives as we live by faith in Christ
We sever the root of sin in our lives by trusting in Christ and his promises, setting them against the lies of Satan who makes promises that appeal to the flesh but only deliver death. This is also how we sever the roots of impatience. Those roots are found in the lies of Satan, as he tells us:

- You don't deserve this, you deserve better!
- If you don't sort this out, no one else will – it's up to you
- You need to be master of your own destiny – you do it

The way we sever the roots of those lies is to have faith in God.

We wait for God and while we wait, we hope in his word and trust his promises
There are three main promises in which we need to trust so that our impatience is turned into the fruit of patience.

1. **We need to trust that God is sovereignly ruling over our waiting.** When we find ourselves in that unplanned place and moving at an unplanned pace, we are generally thinking in terms of our own plans. When those plans don't turn out in

the way or at the time we expected, we say that was unplanned, but what we mean is that it was unplanned **by us**.

That does not mean that there is ultimately no plan behind it. The Bible speaks of a sovereign King who rules over everything in his creation, including our lives.

- Take time to ask yourself whether you truly believe that

The apostle Paul understood this when he found his travel plans frustrated. **And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 6:6-10)**

No doubt Paul had prayed through his plans, and committed them to God, but he found himself in an unplanned place. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who had planned for him to be there, one of many examples in the Bible of how God, the sovereign King, is free to tear up our plans. The wisdom of Proverbs says:

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand
(Proverbs 19:21)

God is God, and he is free to frustrate our plans without explanation. This is truly something our generation needs to understand, for we have largely lost sight of the sovereignty of God in our lives.

**When we find ourselves waiting in an unplanned place and going at an unplanned
pace,**

we can be sure that the waiting has been ordained by God.

**Patience is formed in us when we trust that God has sovereignly ordained what happens
in our life.**

All the unplanned waiting and going at an unplanned pace, whether it is waiting in a queue or something more serious, is not some random frustrating evil that we have to

reluctantly endure. It is the plan of an all wise, all good God who loves us enough to sacrifice his own Son to bring us into his family.

**When we are waiting in the faith that believes that God is sovereign and our lives are not at the mercy of chance,
it will lead to peaceful submission to the providences of God.**

2. We need to trust that God is up to something good in our waiting. God does not frustrate our plans for no reason. Everything he does is for a purpose.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28). We see here that God means to work for our good in everything, including that which is unplanned. It does not mean that everything that happens to us is good, but it does tell us that God works in these things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

God causes all things to work to our good

The life of Joseph is one of the best examples of this. In a dream, God had given Joseph a promise that one day he would rise to a position of authority over many people, including his family. The promise took years to come about, and in the process, Joseph was sold into slavery by brothers who hated him, thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit, and forgotten about by someone who had promised to help him. Eventually God fulfilled his promise, and the result was the physical salvation of many people during years of famine. At the end, he could say to the brothers who had sold him **As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.** (Genesis 50:20).

As well as saving the lives of many people, God shaped Joseph's character, humbling him, as he put him in unplanned places and made him travel at an unplanned pace.

- That is the greatest work that God does in our waiting.

The good that God works for us in Romans 8:28 is **to be conformed to the image of his Son** (Romans 8:29).

The Olympic runner Eric Liddell said: Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. Our broken lives are not lost or

useless. God's love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously, working out His wonderful plan of love.

When we are waiting in the faith that believes that God is sovereign, our lives are not at the mercy of chance, and God is up to something good in the waiting, it will lead to peaceful submission and transformed lives.

How do we wait with hope, when the good we had hoped for does not happen in this life? Perhaps we have a health issue for which there is no cure, or a relationship or working environment that shows no sign of changing.

3. We need to trust that God has something better for us after our waiting.

For the believer in Christ, this world is not all we have to look forward to. There is a world to come where there will be no health issues, unresolved relationships, toxic work environments or frustrated plans.

It is the better that God has planned for us – it is eternal life in his presence.

Looking towards that now will help us to have patience in this life. Paul writes in 2 Cor 4:16-18: **So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

Too many of us are spiritually short-sighted! We are unable to look beyond tomorrow or the next year and we find ourselves filled with fear and frustration. If we are going to experience patience in the unplanned place, at the unplanned pace, then we need to look beyond tomorrow to eternity and all that we will be and will have in eternity.

- How can you patiently wait with God when health issues mean tomorrow is just as painful as yesterday?

Look to the assurance that God is sovereignly governing this time of waiting, and is working out his good purpose to make you more like Jesus.

Look to the assurance that the eternal tomorrow he has planned for you is going to be far better than any physical tomorrow.

The most patient person ever to walk this earth was the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew what it was to submit to his Father's will. In his most agonising time, he prayed 'not my will but yours be done'

- He knew that through his suffering and death on the cross, God would bring about good for humanity, securing eternal life for us.
- He looked beyond present suffering to the better that the Father had promised. The scriptures tell us: **for the joy that was set before him (Jesus) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**
(Hebrews 12:2)
- In his humanity, he lived by trusting the promises the Father had set before him. **As we live by faith in him, so we experience the Holy Spirit producing this fruit of Christlike patience in us.**

Physical harvest is not the harvest we should be most concerned about. The most important harvest is to see the fruit of the Spirit growing in our lives, including the fruit of patience as Christ displayed it for us to see. The root of patience is

Faith in the promise of God that he is sovereign in our waiting

Faith in the promise of God that he is up to something good in our waiting

Faith in the promise of God that he has something better for us after our waiting

Ask yourself:

- What unplanned place has the Lord brought you to, and what unplanned pace is he taking you at?
- Take time to ask God to give you faith to trust his promises, and to bring them to mind when you need them.
- Focus on the future eternal reward to such an extent that it will sustain you in the afflictions of this world.