

# The Difference Patience Makes

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Jonathan Rue

James 5:7-12

05.31.09

'What Difference Does God Make?' Series

Tonight we continue in our series called, What Difference Does God Make?

**SLIDE:**  
**Series Graphic Slide**

And continue through the book of James, hearing how God can make a practical difference in our real lives. In our habits. In the way that we relate to people. Not just in the way that we believe.

**SLIDE:**  
**Hate to wait?**

The average American spends 2 to 3 years of his or her life waiting in line. We line up for the essential things, like voting and buying food at the grocery store. And we line up for frivolous things, like getting the opportunity to embarrass myself in front of 30 million Americans by singing off key on American Idol. We line up at our favorite restaurants. We line up at the airport. We line up in our cars on the road. But this doesn't necessarily mean that we are patient people.

Nope. If we feel that we had to wait too long, we'll make a vow to never go back to that store again. A bad waiting experience can make us totally blacklist a restaurant or store. I'm sure you've all had an experience where you had to wait so long, you made a vow never to go back to that store or go back to that restaurant. Some of the most angry people I've ever encountered happened when I was working at a drive through Starbucks. It's a recipe for disaster. You're getting people before their morning cup of coffee in a format that they expect the car not to have to even come to a full stop, because of the genius of McDonald's service. I mean McDonalds can get away with serving terrible food, because you know it's gonna be quick. But, back to the 7 am Starbucks drive thru, I'm trying to put 2 & ½ splendas into an extra hot latte and have this woman swearing this is her last time ever putting up with me.

And so the service industry has put a lot of time and energy and money thinking about how to reduce the negative impact of waiting in lines. We've come a long way since the days when 9-1-1 calling first began. People had to wait sometimes 30 minutes of a ringing telephone before someone picked up to say, "9-1-1, What is your emergency?" Well, by that time the emergency's probably over. Well these days, companies like Disneyland have sunk enormous amounts of resources into how to make lines more pleasant for people. Every time they

build a new ride, they employ at least 15 people to come in and to try to make the line feel like the experience of the ride has already started. So, there's lots of pictures and things to read so that you begin to feel like you're entering the world of the ride. The lines snake back and forth so you can never tell how long it is. But they provide clear signage that tells you how long the wait is going to be. They've even come up with a way for you to check in on a ride and not have to wait in line through a fast pass. So you schedule your appointment on the ride and then you can come back later and get on it with bypassing the line.

These are all solutions that come out of "queue theory."

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory = the study of waiting in lines**

Queue is the fancy word for a line that you wait in. And queue theory has established certain principles about what makes us irritated about waiting in a line. And the first principle is:

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory principles**

- **Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time**

This means that if we wait, the wait feels so much longer is there's nothing to do. If we're just sitting there, mindlessly waiting. The philosopher William James once said:

**SLIDE:**

"Boredom results from being attentive to the passage of time itself."  
–William James

And so waiting is made worse if we have nothing to do while we're waiting. Another queue theory principle:

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory principles**

- Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time
- **Anxiety makes waits seem longer**

If we have anxiety about the line, then it makes it seem longer. You know this one. You're at the grocery store, approaching the check out lines. You survey 4 or 5 lines. You pick the shortest one. You walk up and you get into it. Then you're looking from side to side, measuring yourself against the person that's just as far away as you are, and you're anxious about, "Is my line going the fastest? Or did I get into the wrong line?" And unfortunately, more often than not, Erma Bombeck's law is true.

**SLIDE:**

Erma Bombeck's Law:

"The other line always moves faster"

I want to show you a little clip of how frustrating it can be when the other line moves faster. Let's watch this clip from Office Space.

**VIDEO CLIP:**

**Play "Office Space" video clip**

And so anxiety makes waits seems longer, but also:

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory principles**

- Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time
- Anxiety makes waits seem longer
- **Uncertain waits are longer than known, finite waits**

So, if we are uncertain about how long we're going to have to wait, it makes the waiting seem so much longer than if we know how long we're going to have to be waiting for something.

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory principles**

- Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time
- Anxiety makes waits seem longer
- Uncertain waits are longer than known, finite waits
- **Unexplained waits are longer than explained waits**

If you have no idea why you have to wait, it is way more frustrating. Airline pilots know this. So if you are stuck sitting on the runway waiting to take off, generally the pilot will come on the intercom and tell you why you are not moving and why your not going to be moving for 3 more hours.

And lastly:

**SLIDE:**

**Queue theory principles**

- Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time
- Anxiety makes waits seem longer
- Uncertain waits are longer than known, finite waits
- Unexplained waits are longer than explained waits
- **Unfair waits are longer than equitable waits**

Have you ever been in a restaurant and put your name in and then 10 minutes later, another group of people comes up, puts their name in. You wait for 20

minutes and then THEY get a seat. Nothing more irritating than feeling the injustice of first come, last served. You've heard of road rage before, well there's such a thing as queue rage. It comes from this sense of injustice. When we feel like we've been short changed and we are not being treated in a fair way while we're waiting in line.

Back in 1998, there was a checkout clerk in a supermarket in Milwaukee, WI, who was working the express "10 items or less" checkout line. Well, there was nobody in her line, and so she waved over somebody with a cart full of groceries from the regular cashier lane next to her. So, a woman came over and began to unload her cart of groceries onto the conveyer belt and be checked out. Well, moments later, of course, another customer comes up with fewer than 10 items, and is enraged that the person in front of her has so many items in the 10 items or less express line. Well, this customer was so furious, so angry at this injustice, that she followed the woman with too many groceries out into the parking lot, had an altercation with her in which she took out a pocket knife and cut off part of the woman's nose. Queue Rage.

So, even though we have to wait in all kinds of lines in life, this does not mean that we are a patient people as we wait in these lines. And even though companies do everything they can to try to make the waiting experience more pleasant and to distract us from the fact that we're actually waiting, this is not the way that God works. God is not interested in trying to entertain us and distract our minds away from the fact that we're waiting. God cannot be rushed and intentionally has built life so that we have to wait. It's part of what God wants us to do. And the reason for this is because how we wait says something about who we are.

**SLIDE:**  
**What waiting says about us**

How we wait varies by country to country and culture to culture. In the former Soviet Union, there were so many shortages of food and consumer goods that whenever people saw a long line forming, they just jumped into the line as well, even though they didn't know what they were waiting in line for. But they were hoping that it was something valuable by the time they got there.

In northern Europe, people line up in a very orderly fashion and rarely butt in. In southern Europe, there's no such things as an orderly line. It's every man for himself. Push yourself to the front. In college I worked in Starbucks in a tourist mall in downtown San Diego, and it was fascinating to watch because there was a very clear line that would wrap around the store and every so often someone would walk in the store, walk straight up to the counter and try to order a drink. This was always a clear sign that they were from a foreign culture. They were from a southern European country because this is how they did it. They just don't do things with orderly lines.

In Beijing, China, people trample over one another trying to get into a train, whereas in Washington, D.C., people line up in precise lines at bus stops, knowing exactly where the bus door is going to open up and that's where the line begins. This would never work in New York or Boston where people just pound their way onto the bus.

MIT professor, Richard Larsen, who is an expert on queue theory, has said that, "A queue is a microcosm of the society in which it exists." You can tell things about the culture that you're in by watching how people line up and wait. And for us personally, it is the same. The way that we wait for things that we're hoping for, things that we're dreaming for, the way that we wait for a breakthrough when we're suffering, the way that we wait in life tells God so much about the condition of our hearts. And the problem is that even though we spend so much of our life waiting for things, so many of us do not know how to wait.

Joan Chittister is one of my favorite Christian authors, and she says this:

**SLIDE:**

"Waiting is both a social disease and a grace in our lives. The trouble is that we have to choose between them. The trouble is that we spend our lives waiting without knowing how to wait." —Joan Chittister

As we open up the book of James tonight to chapter 5, we're going to hear God's word to us about patience. I've called tonight's talk, The Difference Patience Makes. Let's Pray.

**SERMON TITLE SLIDE:**

**The Difference Patience Makes**

**Jonathan Rue**

**James 5:7-12**

**05.31.09**

**'What Difference Does God Make?' Series**

Let's open up God's Word and read out of James 5:7-12,

**SLIDE:**

**James 5:7-12 (TNIV)**

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

From 2000 years ago, James is speaking directly into the heart of the modern American condition. We are impatient. We want things now, we want it quick. Sometimes we might think that this is a new thing, that we've just allowed ourselves to get addicted to all of our technology and so we demand microwave efficiency for everything. But impatience, we see, is an ancient problem that was just as rampant 2000 years ago when James was speaking to the churches through this letter. And in this section of his letter, James is teaching us how to wait well.

**SLIDE:**  
**How to wait well**

It is so important to learn how to wait well because we don't want to waste the opportunity for growth and maturity that God has very intentionally given to through waiting. We don't want to waste this by only focusing on the destination, when what God really wanted to do in us happen on the journey. So James tells us the first thing to do in learning how to wait well is to accept that God has called you to wait.

**SLIDE:**  
**How to wait well: Accept that God has called you to wait**

We see this in verse 7.

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:7a (TNIV)**  
**Be patient**, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming.

This may sound like a simple statement, but notice that James is linking patience with the Lord's return. So patience is not just a thing that we might need if we find ourselves ever in the place of not having what we most desire, but that James is saying that Christians DO NOT have if full what we most desire: namely Christ returning to us in the flesh. So waiting is a fundamental orientation of every Christian. To be a Christian is to be a person that is waiting for Christ to return. When we become followers of Jesus Christ and come into relationship

with God, we must learn to be patient people because we are in a constant state of waiting for the Lord's return. Jesus tells us in John 14:

**SLIDE:**

**John 14:3b (TNIV)**

I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

And Jesus tells us again in Revelation 3:11:

**SLIDE:**

**Revelation 3:11 (TNIV)**

**"I am coming soon.** Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Jesus himself spoke to his disciples and to the churches and said, I am coming back soon. Wait for me. Be patient and wait for me. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were waiting on God to come. And we see in Psalm 130:

**SLIDE:**

**Psalm 130:5-6 (TNIV)**

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.

6 I wait for the Lord

more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

There has always been built in to the very structure of what it means to be in relationship with God that we have a longing and a waiting for him to come in his fullness. What we are experiencing of God now is not the full measure of what we will experience of God in the future and so we wait. Paul describes the eagerness with which we wait in Philippians 3:20:

**SLIDE:**

**Philippians 3:20-21 (TNIV)**

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

We are waiting for our bodies to be transformed. So, those of us that have physical disease and infirmities, those of us that have disabilities, are waiting for our physical bodies to be transformed when Jesus Christ returns. All of us are waiting to step into the fullness of righteousness and holiness in a way that we are simply not experiencing in this broken sinful world now. It's so easy for us

when we turn our lives to Christ, to eagerly desire that he change everything in us immediately.

But look out for the temptation to demand that God fix everything in you immediately. Because God calls us to patience and his process is slow. We never want to develop a demanding spirit that insists that God fix every habit, every fault, every failure in me overnight. God is leading us through a process where he is remaking and reshaping us, but it takes time. A great spiritual writer of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Francis de Sales, said this:

**SLIDE:**

“For you have conceived Jesus Christ, the noblest child in the world, in your soul, and until he is quite brought forth, you cannot but suffer in your labor; but be of good courage, these sorrows once passed, everlasting joy shall remain with you for having brought him forth. Now you shall have wholly brought him forth, when you have entirely formed him in your heart and in your works, by an imitation of his life.” –Francis de Sales

And so what Francis is telling us is that it is going to take time for God to fashion holiness into every aspect of our lives. It is simply not realistic to think that though I fill my mind with endless diversion and entertainment and noise nonstop for the last 10 years, that suddenly in a moment’s notice, I can stop and pray for hours in blissful enjoyment.

It’s simply not realistic to think that I have filled my mind with vile images for the last 5 years and in a moment I’m going to have nothing but good and pure and right thoughts from here on out. If you have been filling your life and your mind with garbage year after year after year, pounding filth into your soul for so long, it is going to take time for God to cleanse you, to purify you, to wash away all of the filth that you have so methodically and consistently poured into your life. And so that’s why Paul says, “We eagerly await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” God will do this and we eagerly await the day when we will be transformed totally.

And so Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:

**SLIDE:**

**2 Corinthians 5:2 (TNIV)**

Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling

And so the first thing we need to do is accept that God has called us to wait. That part of the very foundation of what it means to be a Christian is to be a person who waits, who looks ahead with hope for what is coming in the future. And more than watchmen wait for the morning, we wait for God to return.

And the second thing James tells us about how to wait well is that we must:

**SLIDE:**

**Acknowledge the slow process of life**

Look at verse 7 with me.

**SLIDE:**

**James 5:7 (TNIV)**

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

James looks to a farming metaphor to describe why we better get good at being patient. A farmer understands that there is a process that he is bound into. Part of the structure of the way the world is, is that there are seasons of planting and seasons of harvest. And that those two are not the same thing. There's simply no way to be impatient about farming. Once you plant a seed, you've got to water it and wait. If you try to harvest it a week after you've planted it, all you're doing is digging up a seed. And what James is saying is life is not that much different. Just like there is a slow process in planting and harvesting of fruit and vegetables, there is also a slow process in planting and harvesting fruit in our lives. And if you never understand this, if you never acknowledge that there is a slow process to developing character and virtue in your life, to developing kindness and love, and gentleness—these things that are the fruit of the spirit—if you never acknowledge that this is a slow process, you are headed for frustration and failure.

Yet this isn't what we're told on television. It's not what magazine ads tell us. We live in the age of "you can have it now." Who needs to go to the gym and eat healthy to lose weight? I'm just going to take a diet pill and continue to eat anything I want. I don't need to work hard in college and start out at the bottom of an organization and work my way up. I deserve to be making 6 figures and be in management now. We're constantly bombarded with the message that you can have whatever you want and you can have it now.

But James is saying there is a slow process to life. If you want to succeed in a certain career path, you've got to start at the bottom and do the grunt work well. You've got to show up on time day after day after day and pour yourself into doing a great job at lots of things that you hate doing.

If you want to build character in your life, if you want to be a person of integrity, a person of kindness, a grateful person, there is simply no pill you can take, there is no 5 minute work out you can do. You have to plant the seeds and water them every day through practicing integrity, by being kind when you don't want to be, and by saying thank you to God and thank you to others even when you don't

feel like it. These aren't things that you can learn in an afternoon, and that's OK! There is a slow process. The things that God wants to build into your life are going to come through a slow excruciating process and you are going to have to be patient as God forms and fashions your character. You are going to have to be patient while God leads you toward the things that you most desire in your life. Your dreams and visions that you want so desperately to reach out and grab a hold of right now. But there is a slow process to how God develops us and how God gives to us. And if we never recognize that, we'll never learn how to wait well.

Gary Thomas is a great Christian writer and he says, "Many Christians don't fail; they just quit before they get ripe."

And the third thing that James tells us about how to wait well is:

**SLIDE:**  
**When you don't get what you want, stand firm**

We see this in verse 8.

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:8 (TNIV)**  
You too, **be patient and stand firm**, because the Lord's coming is near.

So he's filling out what patience means by saying *stand firm*. And what does he mean by stand firm? In the Greek, the literal translation is:

**SLIDE:**  
**Sterixate tas kardias = "confirm your hearts"**

A literal translation is to confirm or strengthen your hearts. This isn't a phrase we often use so it's translated into stand firm. But the significance of it is that we aren't to be people that place our heart into something and then take it out and place it over here in this other thing. We are to confirm our hearts in Christ. And as a sign of our patience, we do not waiver in our faith and in what we are waiting on God for. And one of the things that we have to often wait on God for is unfulfilled desires that we have.

**SLIDE:**  
**Stand firm in unfulfilled desires**

So what does it mean to stand firm in the midst of unfulfilled desires? You know as Americans, we have fallen prey to the lie that we deserve to be wealthy, that we have an inherent right to riches. And so when we experience hardship and in this recession, as people begin to lose large portions of wealth, so many people

jump immediately to the fact that this is God's judgment against us and that if we just pray hard enough that the economy will turn around. And that there's a direct causal link between God's pleasure with us and how much money is in our bank account. As we look at how God reveals himself and relates to people in the scriptures, we see that the pleasure and the favor of God does not automatically correspond to how much money people have. The pleasure and favor of God does not mean that God is going to give you everything that you want. And so there can be a kind of selfish patience that we foster in our lives. When we say, God I want this thing and I'll wait for it and I know that you are going to give me this thing. And it very well could be that God is not ever going to give you that thing that you're hoping for so badly. It could be that God has a different plan for your life, that God wants to give you different things.

And so standing firm in unfulfilled desires means that I am standing firm in Christ. That my heart is confirmed in Christ and in trust that he knows what is best for me more than I do. And even though I have these desires and things that I want out of life—I have desires for a family, I have a desire for a spouse, for a life long companion to walk with me, I have desires for children, I have desires for a certain vocation, I have desires to buy a house, whatever it is that you have desire for in this life. You might have desire in ministry, to step into being used by God in larger and larger ways to influence people's lives. Whatever your desire is, it needs to be firmly anchored in your trust that God knows what He's doing with your life. You need to stand firm and confirm your heart in, not whatever that thing is that you desire, but in Christ. And that means *being willing to receive something different than you were hoping for*.

And if God's desires do line up with what your desires are, if they are good and don't come out of your selfishness, but come out of the desires that God has placed in your heart, then we stand firm and wait patiently because as 2 Peter 3 tells us:

**SLIDE:**

**2 Peter 3:8 (TNIV)**

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

God's timetable is different than ours. He does not experience time in the same way that we do. And if you think that's a bad thing, listen to the next verse, 2 Peter 3:9:

**SLIDE:**

**2 Peter 3:9 (TNIV)**

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

So it's not the case that God is so slow in responding to us and giving us what we want. No. God is patient and has been patient with you your whole life. For some of you that may have just recently come to Christ, come into relationship with Jesus, come into the knowledge and the saving truth that God loves you, God was patient with you in your life. God was not quick to make you give account for your life. He gave you time to seek Him out to find Him.

And so we stand firm in unfulfilled desires and secondly, we:

**SLIDE:**  
**Stand firm in the face of other's success**

James tells us this in the next verse, verse 9:

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:9 (TNIV)**  
**Don't grumble against one another**, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Now you might think, what is grumbling against one another have to do with patience? But James understands so well the human psyche. He understands that when we don't get what we want, when our desires are unfulfilled, when we want success in a certain thing and we haven't achieved it yet, we begin to look around at others who have. And we start to grumble against them and speak ill of people that are succeeding at things that we want to be succeeding at. We grumble against people that are receiving things that we wish we were receiving. When we see the desires that we have for our lives being fulfilled in the lives of others, it causes us to grumble and James is saying don't grumble against one another.

Part of being patient is keeping your eyes on your own life and standing firm in what God has called you to. And what God has given you so far. So that you don't miss the process of waiting by looking to other people and grumbling against what God is doing in somebody else's life. There is such a temptation to do this even when God has released things to us in part in our lives. Sometimes we can miss the goodness of where we're at presently because we're straining so much toward the future. So maybe you buy a house that's within what you can afford. But all of a sudden you start noticing how much better other people's houses are than yours. And so you're grumbling against that, and you can't wait to sell your house and to upgrade. You buy a new pair of jeans within your price range and then all of a sudden you start noticing people around you with the cool \$200 jeans and you start grumbling.

Standing firm means enjoying the things that God has given to us now. It means that we don't live in the future. We live in today and we have hope and wait for

the fullness of what God has for us in the future. And then James talks about suffering and he tells us:

**SLIDE:**  
**Stand firm in suffering**

We see in verse 10 the context of what he's telling us:

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:10 (TNIV)**  
Brothers and sisters, as an example of **patience in the face of suffering**, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord

Now we see the context within which James is writing: suffering. He is telling the church to be patience while they are in the midst of great suffering. These aren't people that need to have patience before they get the car they REALLY want, or before they get a new iPhone. They just really need to have patience for that. No, he's talking about people that are in the midst of suffering. People that are being persecuted for their faith. People that are being killed because they believe in Jesus and have to suffer loss of their loved ones.

And there is nothing that will challenge your ability to stand firm in Christ like suffering. When we suffer, when we experience pain, then everything that we thought we believe in is called into question and we have to choose again to confirm our hearts and stand firm in Christ. And suffering and pain are unavoidable. Jesus tells us "in this world, you will have trouble. But do not lose heart because I've overcome the world." So James says be patient until the Lord returns. He is preparing us to have our character forged on the anvil of difficulty.

Now this is not a popular idea these days because we are so addicted to feeling good, so scripted to run away from pain at all costs. But God does allow us to bear some difficulty and some suffering and expects us to stand firm through it.

Thomas Merton was a great spiritual writer of the last century and he wrote:

**SLIDE:**  
"If we bear with hardship in prayer and wait patiently for the time of grace, we may well discover that the meditation and prayer are very joyful experiences. We should not, however, judge the value of our mediation by 'how we feel.' A hard and apparently fruitless mediation may in fact be much more valuable than one that is easy, happy, enlightened, and apparently a big success." --Thomas Merton

And so what James as well as Thomas Merton are telling us is that the marker for success in our spiritual life and in our maturity in Christ is not how well are things going in my life, but am I standing firm in my faith in Christ. No matter

what my feelings are, no matter how happy or pleasant my life is, the most crucial question is am I standing firm, is my heart fixed and anchored in Jesus Christ? This is what the prophets before us did, as James looks to them for our example. The Old Testament prophets had to speak very unpopular words to the nation of Israel, prophecy about things that wouldn't happen for generations to come. And yet they stood firm in their faith and conviction, even though they did not themselves get to experience the good things that they foretold.

And so we stand firm in unfulfilled desires. We stand firm in the face of other's success. We stand firm in suffering. Next James tells us that we are to look ahead to blessing for perseverance.

**SLIDE:**  
**Look ahead to blessing for perseverance**

Let's look at verse 11.

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:11 (TNIV)**

As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

I love the phrase that we count as blessed those who have persevered. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. God sees what you're going through. If God calls you into something difficult, if God calls you to endure suffering and to stand firm and wait for God's redemption, for God's healing, that does not go unnoticed. God rewards those who persevere. God rewards and blesses those who stand firm and wait patiently for him to move.

And so James brings up Job as a model of perseverance. Job, who lost everything, that had everything he held dear in life stripped away from him. He lost his family, he lost his wealth, he lost his health. And yet he never lost his faith in God. And in the sovereignty and goodness of God. And so James says, we see what the Lord finally brought about in his life. That at the end of the book of Job, we see that God rewards Job and restores him with even more than he had before. There is great reward when we persevere and don't give up.

Being a person that is waiting on God means that you don't take as a sign that everything is going to be easy or that every door is going to just fly open for you. It means that we have patience in holding on to what God has called us to do in our life. We have patience in holding on to what we're hoping for God to do even if things aren't lining up for it yet. We persevere in our faith in God. We persevere in our hope for what God has for us in our life. And there is great blessing for perseverance. Lastly James tells us to trust only in God not in ourselves.

**SLIDE:**  
**Trust only in God, not yourself**

And we see this in verse 12:

**SLIDE:**  
**James 5:12 (TNIV)**

Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

Now we don't speak a lot of oaths these days, but what James is saying is that we are not to put our trust and our faith in anything else other than God. And we need to know our limitations about what we can guarantee and what we can't. And the fact is there is not a lot that we can guarantee. We are living in the palm of God's hand. Every breath that is in our lungs is a gift of God and it is only by the sustaining power of God that we have any life at all. And it's only by the provident grace of God that we are able to function in our lives. And so any way that we try to guarantee that we will be able to do something in the future, James is saying that's foolishness. You don't know that. Some of us are so certain about what God has for us. We just think God's told me. I am going to be a missionary in this country. God has told me. I am going to have this kind of ministry. God has told me. I am going to marry this kind of a person. We don't know that. We hold all things loosely because we cannot guarantee what is in our future.

We cannot make any kind of oath or vow about what we will make happen. Our future is not up to us. It's up to God. God is the one who is leading and guiding and directing our lives. And so we do not swear by heaven, by earth or by anything else. All we say is a simple yes or no. We communicate truth as Christians. And our word is enough. If you are a follower of Jesus, your yes should be a yes. People should not have to wonder what else is going on. What do you really mean? We communicate truth in all of our words so that we don't have to exaggerate, we don't have to overcompensate in order to convince somebody of the truth. We just speak a simple yes and no. Recognizing that the future belongs to God and all we are capable of doing is communicating the truth of right now.

And so to boil it all down. What is James saying in this whole passage of text? The basic point is this. Patience is saying that God will do it, not me. I will have trust in God and wait patiently for him to move rather than trying to do it myself, rather than trying to guarantee that I can do it or grab after it now, but that I am placing myself at the mercy and grace of God. And having patience that He will move in his time and when we do this, then we can agree with Lamentations 3:24:

**SLIDE:**

**Lamentations 3:24 (TNIV)**

I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25  
The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks  
him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

# The Difference Patience Makes

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Jonathan Rue

James 5:7-12

05.31.09

'What Difference Does God Make?' Series

**Hate to wait?**

**What waiting says about us**

**How to wait well:**

**Accept that God has called you to wait (v. 7)**

**Acknowledge the slow process of life (v. 7)**

**When you don't get what you want, stand firm (v. 8-9)**

**Stand firm in unfulfilled desires**

**Stand firm in the face of other's success (v. 9)**

**Stand firm in suffering (v. 10)**

**Look ahead to blessing for perseverance (v. 11)**

**Trust only in God, not yourself (v. 12)**