



After a hard-hitting section in 5v1-6 on the injustice and oppression at work in the world by the rich, we were surprised to see that the response God calls the church to is simply to “be patient” (v7). We expected something a bit more dynamic perhaps – a call to arms and to action. We find it hard to wait at the best of times in the 21st Century western world!

We considered:

1 – the need for our wait

We are to wait because Christ is coming back (v7), and he’s coming back soon (v8). We may not know exactly when he will return, but we are living in the end times and we can be confident that he will be back soon. So we must wait!

We also must wait because the results of his coming can only come when he has returned. Just as a farmer cannot short-circuit the harvest – going straight from planting seeds to enjoying fruit (v7) – we can’t short-circuit Christ’s return. We mustn’t try to claim or expect *in the now*, what we’re promised for *then* – for the future. It is Jesus who will bring God’s kingdom, not us. Our primary role is to pray. This does not mean that we have no active part to play at all (for Christ brings his kingdom through the church) but it does mean we need to keep our perspectives right.

2 – the nature of our wait

James focuses his instructions about how we wait on our inter-personal relationships, and particularly upon our speech.

James gives two instructions and then an example. He commands that we:

- don’t grumble against each other (v9): Our fuses tend to get shorter when we are under pressure, and we incline towards seeing people as obstacles in our way. We complain about them either to their faces or behind their backs.

- don’t swear oaths (v12): Although oath-making is a different thing in our context, we must be wary of the rash, loose words that can tumble out of our mouths when we are stressed. Our brothers and sisters should be able to trust what we say. We should speak truthfully.

James also gives us the example of the prophets (v10-11). In the prophets (James particularly draws our attention to Job) we see that living under oppression is the pattern, not the exception, for God’s people. We also see an example of what it looks like to patiently persevere. Finally, we see that the God we trust is good and gracious; he is “full of compassion and mercy” (v11).

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Why is patience something we find hard, living in the 21st Century western world?
2. What is James’ primary command to the church in a world filled with injustice?
→ What do you make of this command?
→ How does it sit with you?
3. What impact does knowing that Christ will return soon have upon our desire and ability to be patient in the face of suffering and injustice?
→ How real a reality is Christ’s return in your heart, mind and life?
→ How is James’ illustration of the farmer a helpful one?
4. Why do you think James picks the two particular commands he picks to focus on?
→ In what ways are you tempted to grumble about and speak loosely to your fellow Christians?
5. How can the examples of the prophets – and of Job in particular – encourage us and equip us to wait for Christ’s return?