

- 1) This next passage highlights one of those things we have discussed in the past.
- 2) Early Christians were expecting Christ's return to be "sooner rather than later" – meaning probably in their lifetimes or shortly thereafter.
- 3) In verses 7-8 James asks them to be patient and with that patience, to also be strong.

James 5:7–9 (NASB 2020)

Exhortation

⁷ Therefore be patient, brothers *and sisters*, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸ You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Do not complain, brothers *and sisters*, against one another, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

- 4) If we think back on all that James has been telling these believers we will see that he has really brought into sharp focus many things that they might have to change in their lives.
 - a) Things that are not easy but things that are necessary in order to live lives that are pleasing to God and being true emulators of Christ.
- 5) At the conclusion of verse 8 he says, "the coming of the Lord is near."
- 6) James did not know anymore than you or I know about exactly when the Lord would return.
- 7) However, given our lives and regardless of our age, one thing we can know is one way or the other our struggle is finite.
 - a) We need to have what I think James is trying to give these folks – hope – hope that the struggles we have every day will not last forever.
 - b) There will be rest! There will be peace!
 - c) And there will be an end to the physical and mental struggles and an end to our struggle against self.
- 8) He concludes his request for patience with a reason
 - a) Don't complain so you won't be judged.
 - b) He emphasizes again, the end is near and the Judge is at the door.
 - c) This also adds a perspective that perhaps we don't think of much.
 - i) Regardless of whether we go to the Lord or the Lord comes for us – what is done is done.
 - ii) Whether the judgement is immediate – Christ returning – or far off (we don't know how long) at the end point our state is our state.
 - iii) There is no purgatory, no length of time so long, no changes that will be made.
 - iv) We will be judged on where we are at the moment of our departure.
- 9) Now that is not just a really pleasant thing to think about but I think it is a perspective that James is trying to convey to these folks.

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10) All that he has been saying is important for them to put into their lives (AND OURS) now and be strong, patient, and persevere to the end.

Looking at this, do you think we are exercising patience with our view of the time of the second coming or is it more complacency?

1) James continues in verses 10 and 11 with a couple of examples of patience with a dash of perspective thrown in for good measure...

James 5:9–11 (NASB 2020)

¹⁰ As an example, brothers *and sisters*, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

2) The first example he gives is that of the prophets and their patience.

a) The perspective here is – go and do likewise.

3) The second example is that of Job.

a) The perspective I think he is offering here is to keep in mind that God is gracious and merciful.

i) We sometimes forget that even though the devil was part of the reason Job was in the predicament he was in, he still did not always think the way God wanted him to during his ordeal.

b) Now, there seems to be a conflict here at first glance.

c) James has indicated here – the end is the end and there is no changing that.

So, here is an easy question – what are ways you think we might interpret how these two things go together?

d) Those who have had a relationship with, loved and served the Lord in the ways that James has been sharing – whatever state we are in at the end we can count on the grace of our God to bring us to our reward.

e) Those who have ignored God and lived their lives as they pleased do not have the privilege of trusting in God's mercy and grace.

4) Ok here's another subject change...

James 5:12 (NASB 2020)

¹² But above all, my brothers *and sisters*, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment.

5) In our society today, at least in the US, there are several times one is required to take an oath:

a) In court when we are testifying.

i) Even in this situation today, most courts are offering alternatives.

- ii) Many are moving toward generic oaths or affirmations without any religious text or context involved.
- b) When we enter the military.
- c) When we are sworn into a federal (and sometimes local) office.
- d) Also in some professional codes oaths are required.
- 6) Serious oaths between individuals very seldom if ever take place.
- 7) We definitely do not have to take oaths when making purchases – even very large purchases such as businesses, houses, or cars.
- 8) This situation is really in stark contrast to the 1st century.
 - a) In the 1st century, oaths were very highly regarded at all levels.
 - b) They were most always connected to religious beliefs and even specific deities.
 - i) Many were required to be sworn by the Emperor who was most often deified.
 - c) People took oaths as witnesses and guarantors of their promises and in legal proceedings.
 - i) Oaths were crucial and were used in both social and political contexts, to solidify agreements, alliances, and loyalties.
 - d) Most 1st century societies including the Romans and it seems especially the ancient Israelites placed a high value on the sanctity of oaths.
 - e) There were severe consequences for those who broke them.
- 9) The Jewish people were especially keen on personal oaths and they added their own special twist to them. They setup a hierarchy vs. commitment scale.
 - a) The objects of their oaths were:
 - i) God's name
 - ii) The temple
 - iii) The altar
 - iv) Heaven
 - v) Earth
 - vi) Jerusalem
 - vii) One's own head
 - viii) The Law/Torah
 - ix) The lives of your children
 - x) By one's own life
 - b) The hierarchy was:
 - i) Most Binding – Direct oaths using God's name.
 - ii) Highly Binding – Oaths made using sacred objects (Temple, altar, sacrifices).
 - iii) Binding (avoided using God's name) – Oaths by natural elements (heaven, earth)
 - iv) Obligatory (less formal) – Personal oaths were more easily broken.
- 10) Now, hold on to all that and let's look at the problems that James is really addressing.

11) First, one of the biggest issues here is the third commandment.

Exodus 20:7 (NASB 2020)

⁷ “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

12) I think this can be seen for the problem it is when we look closely at Jesus’ teaching on the same thing.

Matthew 5:34–37 (NASB 2020)

³⁴ But I say to you, take no oath at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God,
³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶ Nor shall you take an oath by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷ But make sure your statement is, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil *origin*.

13) It would be my assumption that if you were not to swear by heaven because in was God’s throne then it would be even worse to use God’s name.

a) Of course, we add to that many Jews avoided even pronouncing God’s name to prevent violation of the 3rd commandment.

14) Many scholars do not really see any of that as part of the issue being addressed here.

a) Instead, they put forth that the real problem being addressed is one of honesty.

15) I definitely agree that honesty is a major thing that is being addressed here.

a) However, we must realize that honesty is in actuality, a two way street,

i) When we obey Jesus’ command to let our yes be yes and no be no, it is inferred that as the hearer, we must do the same.

ii) In other words, we must believe our brothers and sisters and not require an oath – truly not how things were being done!

16) However, in addition to that, if we really look at what both Jesus and James are saying, the recipients of this teaching have another problem and it is a BIG PROBLEM!

17) Their brothers and sisters might accept their yes or no but Rome would not accept a simple yes or no.

18) If, by law, you were bound to swear an oath by a specific deity or the Emperor, you were going to be required to break this teaching.

19) In the research I did on this I could not find any definitive numbers.

a) However, there were probably many 1st century Christians who were martyred for that very reason – they would not break this teaching.

b) A couple of specific examples I found were:

i) First, in the accounts of Polycarp's martyrdom. He refused to swear by Caesar's genius (guiding spirit) which was one of the factors leading to his death.

ii) Second, in Eusebius’ Church History (book V) he describes a horrific martyrdom scene in Lyon.

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- (1) A Christian woman and her 15yr. old son would not swear by pagan gods so they were tortured and killed.
- 20) Ok – having said all that, let's get to the question.

What are our takeaways here? What does this command say to you and me today right here in Ft. Worth at the corner of Altamesa and Hulen?

- a) Obvious #1 – Be truthful in all things and all ways – “yes be yes and no be no”.
- b) Obvious #2 – Not to take the Lord's name in vain.
- c) Obvious #3 – Do not swear frivolously.
- d) Obvious #4 – Do not swear by other things.
- e) NOT so obvious #5– What about oaths of office, witnesses, etc.?