

Do not Grumble

Romans 12

Hebrews 12:14-24

I thought that we would be finishing out James by now but there really has been quite a bit here in the last chapter to unpack. Each week as I am going through this, things that I think I am going to hit end up not making it in for one reason or the other. So today we are going to continue looking at the middle of chapter 5 here, starting in verse 9.

James is closing this letter and giving final instruction and words of advice to his readers covering over and applying that what he taught in previous chapters. Last week we looked at having peace in persecution and not only that but also our day to day struggles. Before that we looked at having patience through persecution and how we as christian people are to patiently wait upon the lord, and seeking him and not wallowing in our own self pity and despair.

I think patience in persecution and God's provision for his elect has been a big part of James instruction. If we go back to the first few verses he already starts saying that we should count it all joy when when we fall into various trials, knowing that the testing for our faith produces patience. He doesn't say that our trials produces holiness, or righteousness, he says that our trials, produce in us patience. He goes on to say and let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing.

Now that we have reached the end of this book I think it puts a little different light on this passage here in chapter 1. What is the perfect work of patience, and how does patience make us perfect and lacking in nothing? Well that answer to those questions is here in chapter 5, be patient waiting upon the Lord, waiting for the coming of the Lord, our ultimate deliverance to all of our worries and cares, the end of all our or persecution and trials.

He says we are to be patient as a farmer waiting for the rain, he doesn't say that this farmer is worried about drought, or lack of rain, he does not doubt that rain will come to water his crop so that it may grow and he may harvest it, but rather that he is patiently waiting for the rain that is sure to come, just as we are to be patiently waiting for our Lord and Savior who is one day sure to come. So how does this patience do it's perfect work, making us lacking nothing? Verse 8 James says, You also be patient, just as the farmer is patient, and establish your hearts for the coming of the lord is at hand.

We are not to necessarily seek deliverance from what ever we are going through, although we are told to seek God to deliver us from our trials and temptations, deliverance from the persecution that the Jewish Christians were experiencing at this time I don't think was really Jame's goal here, he doesn't tell them to flee, or to seek resolution, but rather to establish their hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

They are to focus their hearts and their minds upon Christ, not to be so concerned for their lot in life, but instead to establish, or focus, or to direct their hearts on God, for his coming. I think this is the patience that produces the perfect work so that we are lacking in nothing that James talks about in chapter 1.

The reason that I say that is if we are setting our minds on Christ, seeking his will in our lives, seeking his glory, and seeking his grace then much of our cares and problems in this world I think will become small if we properly understand that God, is the sovereign lord of all, and as we were saying last week...he has already overcome the world.

Patiently waiting on God, for his deliverance, whether it be the physical or spiritual deliverance of what ever trial we are facing in our lives now, or if it is just patiently waiting on God for his ultimate deliverance when he will gather his sheep to himself. This Will change the outlook of our problems, it will focus our attention, our minds and our hearts on our heavenly Father and away from ourselves.

A person who is patiently waiting upon Christ, will be the type of person that James is calling his listener to be. He says to seek wisdom if you lack it, ask God for it and he will give it. A person who is patiently waiting, and seeking God's will, will also be asking and seeking for God's wisdom in what ever trial, persecution or situation they find themselves in.

Christ gives us a perfect example of this very thing the night of his betrayal by Judas. No matter what trials or temptation any of us have gone through here, I think it is pretty safe to say we have not even come close to that of Christ's night of betrayal. He knew one of his disciples would betray him, he knew that he would be beaten and his body broken and put to death in the most horrendous way. And we see here, in Luke chapter 22, vs 42 he went to the Mount of Olives as was his custom and he prayed. Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me, nevertheless not my will, but yours be done.

How often do we come to God, pleading and begging for him to take whatever trial, or persecution or uncomfortable thing that we are dealing with away from us, but do we ask Lord, not my will, but yours be done. Waiting upon God, to deliver as God sees fit to deliver, not in our way, but in His. This is the wisdom that James is instructing his readers to seek, seek Godly wisdom, And maybe God's will is not for you to be delivered from that which you are seeking to be delivered from at that time. Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh be removed, but God never did.

. Turn with me to 2nd Corinthians chapter 12, starting in verse 6. There is much speculation as to what this thorn in the flesh was, but no matter what it was, it was given to him as he says to keep him weak and humble. He prayed to be delivered from it, but God's answer was "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness" If we read on we see Paul's response. It was not constant complaining, and pleading to have it removed but an acceptance of God's will and he says in verse 9 I will boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefor I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christs sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This goes back to the very thing that James is telling us, that we should have patience, that we should wait on God, and rest in him, and seek wisdom and his will and not our own. Paul found pleasure in his trial because when he understood it, its purpose, for he understood that when he is weak and relying upon Christ that is when he is strong. That is how James can tell us to Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that this testing of faith produces perfect patience and wisdom as we wait upon Christ, and seek his grace, his glory, and his will.

That goes right back to the first chapter of James again when he tells us to ask God for wisdom, he says ask in faith, do not doubt and let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. That is what Paul was doing, the thorn in the flesh became in him a form of exaltation, because it brought him low, kept him weak and humble so that he should seek strength from God and God working in him despite his circumstances what ever they may be. James says in chapter 4 verse 10 to humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. This is how Paul could count his thorn in the flesh, his trials, his persecution, as pleasure, and as joy because it was he who was brought low, and Christ in him who was elevated. James tells us to Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, that it is Christ who sees, Christ who lifts us up, and it is Christ who delivers, and if not freeing us in this life, we will be freed in the next. it is Christ who gives us the grace that we need to endure, so that we will set our mind and our heart upon him and seek his will and to say just as Christ did that evening on the Mount of Olives. Not my will Lord, but yours.

That brings us to what we are looking at today. Verse 9, James tell us to not grumble against one another, lest we be condemned. This is the opposite of where we should be. If we are to have patience and wait upon God we are not to be grumbling and complaining as we do so! If we are grumbling and complaining about our trials that we may be going through, is our focus correct? IF we are focusing on Christ, if we are patiently waiting upon him, if we like Paul understand how Christ working in us through the trial has the end result which exalts Christ, IT is in that which we can have Joy and great pleasure knowing that we have a sovereign savior who watches over and cares for us, and because that is so we should not be grumbling about it!

James here in verse 9 isn't telling us as individuals to not complain or grumble, he says here that we should not grumble against one another, but even so I think the same principle can be applied to each person individually in our own daily struggles. Earlier James laid out how the family of God should act toward each other and here he is reinforcing that teaching by telling us not to be the opposite of what we should be. In chapter 2 he tells his readers not to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality, and to show love toward our brothers and sisters. If we love as we ought, if we esteem ourselves low, not seeking our own gain but rather seek the betterment of those around us, this mindset, or as Paul said in Galatians, walking in the spirit, and if we are walking in the spirit Paul says that we should not be conceited, provoking one another, and envying one another. If we as Christians could grasp this fully, I think it would eliminate much of the grumbling against each other we see in the churches.

There are a few ways that grumbling can arise in the church, and they are things that should be avoided. One instance of grumbling is not having proper respect for those that God has put over you. Paul says in Hebrews 13:17 "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." This isn't to say that the Pastor, or elders of the church are dictators and have control over every single member, it is instructing members of the body to be submissive to spiritual instruction given to them by those who God has appointed to be under shepherds, and who are concerned for your soul.

Another way that grumbling can happen within the church is when members of the church begin fighting and arguing amongst each other. This isn't anything that we deal with here, but there are many, many stories of churches who have divided, or people have left the church over silly things such as the color of the carpet, or because something is not exactly how they may wanted it. Paul in Galatians tells us how we should handle this type of thing, Chapter 5:13 he says

For you, brethren have been called to liberty, only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love, serve one another. This goes back to what I was just saying that if our hearts are in the right place, if we esteem ourselves lower than our brothers and sisters and seek what is good for them, we through love should be serving one another and not seeking our own desires to the detriment of others. Paul continues on and says, verse 14, For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another. He also says in Chapter 6 of Galatians that we are to bear one another's burdens. If we seek to do this, that puts our focus, and our hearts on the needs of others instead of our selves. If we could just fully grasp this, I think that it would eliminate the problem of arguments in the church over petty selfish desires.

We are all human, we are all different personalities, we have different interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes. But none of that should matter, or ever become an issue if our heart is right toward each other. For those who are Christs, have put on Christ and we should see and recognize Christ in our brothers and sisters no matter the differences, we share the love of our Father and should never show partiality or favoritism toward those who are like ourselves, and avoid or ignore those who are not. We should not grumble against each other because that brother or sister who is God's adopted child has Christ working in them also.

Turn with me to Romans 14: starting in verse 7.

Paul is warning us not to put a stumbling block or cause our brother or sister to fall. Being angry, or bitter toward a brother or sister, not only is sin working in you, it can also produce a stumbling block of anger and bitterness in them. James tells us not to grumble against each other and I think Paul is pretty much warning about the same thing here when he says Why do you judge your brother, for we all shall stand before the judgment of Christ. Much of the arguing between people in the body of believers is because of this very thing, instead of ridicule, or gossiping, or judging each other in worldly things we should instead resolve not to be a stumbling block by bickering and arguing over matters of little importance,

But in case I am misunderstood I feel I need to clarify that Paul here is not saying that we should not accept sinful behavior. We should not let a brother or sister that we see who have fallen away and are caught up in sin to just continue in it because we are "not to judge them" If there was not a way that we are to judge one another then we would not know if one is overtaken in sin. Back to Galatians chapter 6, Paul tells us that if a brother is overtaken in sin, those who are spiritual are to restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

There is a difference between judging if a brother or sister is caught in sin, and judging a person on what they eat, or what they wear, or color of skin, or political affiliation, James says to not Grumble against each other because the judge is standing at the door. Once again back to what Paul said in Romans 14 why do you judge each other, or why do you show contempt toward each other for we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We need to be watchful that we are not grumbling against each other, and putting a stumbling block, or causing a brother or sister to fall for God will judge us for it.

Another way there can be grumbling in the church is because of dishonesty. To which James instructs us in verse 12, Above all my brethren do not swear either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no, lest you fall into judgment. We as children of God are to be

honest people, seeking truth. The Pharisees had a tendency to make oaths, some oaths they would swear by God which they then considered binding, and others were flippant oaths which they would not uphold if they didn't feel like it.

Jesus instructs us in Matthew chapter 5 which tells us that we should not take an oath or swear by anything. Let us go there, and read starting in verse 33-37.

As Christians we are to be honest, trustworthy people who have no need for oaths, or to swear by things to keep us honest, our yes should be yes, and our no should be no. Much grumbling and arguing in the church could be caused by our yes's not being yes's and our no's not being no's .

And lastly one of the reasons there can be grumbling in the church is because the church is made up of a conglomerate of believers, and those who think themselves to be. We have gone through almost all of the book of James now, where he has every step of the way laid out the difference between those who are Christs, and those who have deceived themselves. He tells us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, to seek wisdom, to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. We are to receive with meekness the implanted word, the teaching, and instruction of scripture. True faith, has true action, true faith produces good works for it is Christ working through his children to do so.

The conflict between those who are truly Christs, and those who deceive themselves can be the most difficult part of the dealing the the church body. There is no absolute way for us to know, only God knows fully who his children are, but that being said I think that we should all be measuring ourselves, and testing to be sure that our faith is true. Let us each resolve to not be the one to put our own selfish desires or ambitions above another. Let us resolve to Not be a stumbling block to our brothers and sisters, and let us resolve not to be the cause of grumblings and arguments in the local assembly of God's children. As Paul said in our reading in Romans this morning. If it is possible, as much as depends upon you, live peaceably with all men.