

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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Be Patient, Therefore, Brothers

James 5:7-8

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you for your goodness, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for the worship that we are able to give you in song. I thank you for blessing Logan and giving him the grace, the strength and the ability to lead us, we just praise you for that, Lord. And Father, as we open up our -- the book that you've given to us, as we lead worship in another way, the way of trying to grow and understand what you have for us here, Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us, I pray that as we look into your book, your Spirit would accompany us, that you would give us the ability to hear it, to understand it and to once again make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, our text this morning may seem just a little bit familiar, it is James 5:7-8. Let me just read it to you. It says: *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 late rains. You also, be*

patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Now, the reason the text may seem familiar is that right at the very beginning of the book of James, we encountered this scripture in James 1:2. It says this: My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

I pointed out back then that the Greek word for patience in that text is the word "hupomone." It's the combination of two different Greek words, "hupo" means under, and "meno" which means to remain, and "hupomone" basically means to remain under. It's the ability to hold steady, it's the ability to remain when the pressure of trials are literally trying to put you under. It means so much more than the word "patience" entails. Patience conveys the idea that you're willing simply to accept a trial. Hupomone conveys the idea that you are not only accepting it but you are willing to stare it in the face, that you refuse to back down from it and choose instead to stay with it allowing God's grace to transform you through it. And it's far more than mere patience.

Well, our text this morning, in our text this morning James is using a different Greek word that's also translated patience. This word's also a compound word, it's the word *macrothumeo*. "Macro"

means long, "thumeo" means temper, and it means long tempered or long suffering. It's an imperative; it is a command. God says be patient, be long tempered, be long suffering therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. While "hupomone" means to remain under, "macrothumeo" means be slow to get angry. And this aspect of patience is summed up well in two proverbs. Proverbs 15:18 says: *A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.* Proverbs 16:32 says: *Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.* And so to put this into context, if someone is torturing you for being a Christian, well, you would need hupomone patience to bear up under the pain, under the abuse. You would also need macrothumeo patience to keep you from lashing out at the one who's causing you the pain.

Last week we looked at James' indictment of the very ones who were causing all of this pain to his flock. Let me just reiterate that. This is James 5:1. James says: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are come upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your 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. Behold, 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. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

What we see this morning is James answering this cry for justice with an even greater cry for patience on the part of his flock. And this is a patience that resists the urge to strike back at these wealthy oppressors. We see three times James says this, he says: *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. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* So what James is doing, he's exhorting his flock to be slow to respond in anger to what was taking place. And he compares the patience that God is seeking to the patience that the farmer has in trying to grow a crop. The crop that James is speaking of is really just justice. James' people understand that any farmer who wants to have a harvest, he has to have a purpose, he has to have a plan, and he also has to have a pace with which to implement the plan. I mean, his purpose can't be just to grow things. His purpose must be to produce something of value, something that he can bring to market,

something that he can make a living on. I grow poison ivy without even raising a finger, but the market for poison ivy is really lousy. I need to grow the right things at the right place at the right time if I ever hope to get a return.

Well, God has a purpose in growing us as well. His purpose is to produce something of infinite value in us. Romans 8:28 says: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* So we ask okay, what is God's purpose? Well, he wants to uniquely reproduce some aspect, some reflection of the image of his Son in your life and in mine for his glory. That's why it says in Romans 8:29: *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* You see, before the world was even formed, God chose deeply flawed sinners like you and me to, by faith in his shed blood, become his adopted sons and daughters. Ephesians 4:1-6 says: *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.* You see, his will is that every one of his sheep will in some way uniquely reflect the very image of his Son, Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace. And glory is simply God's character put on display. That's what it is. You see, as believers, you and I each

represent a unique portrait of the loveliness, of the wisdom, of the power of Jesus Christ. God's purpose was to raise up representatives from every single tribe, tongue, and nation whose lives would reflect that image for his glory. So each of us uniquely represents some aspect of who Jesus Christ is that nobody else can represent, and God is committed to spending the rest of our lives growing in us our ability to be like Jesus so that our lives bring glory to God.

You know, the simplest answer to the question: "What is the point of my life" is this practical suggestion in Matthew 5:16: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* You see, there are three main things that God is after here that he shares with the farmer. God has a purpose, a plan, and a pace; and just like in the case with the farmer, they all require patience to develop. God's purpose is to re-create the image of Jesus Christ in you. The farmer's purpose is to produce a crop. For that, he needs a plan. He needs a plan that covers what he's going to plant, where he's going to plant it, and when he is going to plant it. I mean, after all, if you want to grow oranges and grapefruits, you don't buy a farm in Wisconsin. You buy one in California or in Florida. And wherever your farm is located, you know that the timing, that is the pace for planting and harvest, is absolutely critical. You know that

everything about farming requires a plan. God's plan is far more detailed and complete than any farmer's.

This is his plan. His plan is to use every single event in your life, the good, the bad, and the ugly, to shape and mold you uniquely into the image of Christ. That's why he says in Romans 8:28: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* So God's purpose is to re-create the image of his Son in us. His plan is to use every single event in our lives for that one purpose. *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* But what I want to concentrate on this morning is this third aspect of God's will for our lives, because it is the part that provokes profound confusion and disappointment, and it's God's pace. You know, the farmers that James was speaking of understood that timing was everything. They typically planted grains after the early rains of October and then they anticipated a harvest after the late rains of April or May. So the farmer had a purpose and a plan for producing his crop, and he also knew from experience that it required patience to understand the pace of producing a crop. James 5:7 says: *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.* So God has a plan and a purpose for each of our lives and he also has a

pace, and that's where we get hung up.

Now, I counseled a good many people in my day, and I would have to say that well over 50 percent of the stress and the pain and the anguish that I see in people is directly related to their misunderstanding of God's idea of "pace." We, as a people, are incredibly impatient with God, and some of our impatience is as old as the impatience that James is dealing with here with his flock. You know, they had been waiting and suffering for years at the hands of the government, at the hands of their fellow Jews, and James is commanding them to practice macrothumeeo or this long-tempered patience while they wait for God to intervene on their behalf. But there's another type of impatience that we suffer from, and it's something that the people of James' day could never have even imagined. It is something that's far more a product of our culture, and it stems from the way that we look at time. You see, there are two different ways of experiencing time that are almost diametrically opposed, and one way is God's way and the other way is ours. By "ours," I don't mean people in general, I mean specifically people in North America. I mean people in Western cultures. We look at time in a way God never does, and that causes an enormous amount of heartache for us. You see, we are pathologically given to impatience not only with God but with virtually everything else, and to put it simply, God doesn't look

at time the way we do. Now, I would love to go into a lengthy analysis of it. The reason why I can't has much to do with the nature of the problem itself. We just don't have the time.

You know, it has been said that the single most oppressive invention of all time is this little thing that I have on my wrist. Most of you have one on your wrists. Mine cost 12 bucks; I got it at Wal-Mart. It breaks down time into tenths of a second. We now routinely break down the 24 hours in the day in order to parcel out the 60 minutes that each one of those contain, and that's 1,440 minutes, and those minutes contain 86,400 seconds. And if you think we don't really care about them, just try adding up how many seconds it takes for something to load on to your computer. You know, I mean if it normally takes six seconds and somehow it takes ten, we are freaked out. We are genuinely frustrated. It's a difference of four seconds. We are pathologically impatient. How many seconds does it take for a commercial to start playing on television before you grab the remote and you're flipping like crazy through the channels? You know, for me that's an interval of about four or five seconds. I wonder, do you really need those four seconds?

Robert Banks wrote a book called the Tyranny of Time, and in it he says this: "It is disturbing to find people congratulating

themselves every time a speed record is broken, as if going faster were some end in itself; we fail to think about what use it is, to gain time like this. Similar congratulations are voiced every time a new remedy is invented, as if living longer were also an end in itself; we fail to work out what it is we are actually living for. People do not know what to do with their time because the spiritual foundations of their lives have been destroyed. As Ellul says: 'No one knows where we are going, the aim of life has been forgotten, the end has been left behind. Man has set out at tremendous speed to go nowhere.'

Banks is on to something. You see, we are the end product of an industrial revolution that defined the hour in terms of its ability to produce. Factories were designed to squeeze the maximum potential out of every single hour, even down to those time motion studies that were conducted on production lines. People would come into the line and they would stare at the way you moved your arm or your hand or your back or any other part of you so that fractions of seconds could be gained from each little motion, thereby ensuring a net hourly production gain. Well, something bad came out of that. The result was that time is no longer viewed the way it has been viewed since biblical times. We now view time quantitatively instead of qualitatively. Time today is viewed strictly in terms of its monetary value: Time is money. And

you're wasting my money. That's the way people relate.

You know, we have a minimum wage of somewhere around \$8 an hour all the way up to the rates that high-powered lawyers charge at 500 bucks an hour, but even that represents a complete reversal of values. You see what that is is the value of an hour today is based on what you can get for it, whereas in biblical times, the value of time was defined by what you were doing with it. Listen to Ecclesiastes 3:1, it says: *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*

You see, the biblical framework for time was not defined by the hour itself but by what you were doing with that hour. Jesus went about his Father's business, and that's what defined how he spent his time. He was not pressured by the tyranny of the urgent like

we are. Even when his dear friend Lazarus lay critically ill, Jesus still pursued his Father's goal instead of the circumstance of the hour. In John 11:6, this is speaking again of Lazarus, it says this: *So, when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."* Well, we know that in those two days, Lazarus died. We think shouldn't Jesus have hopped on a fast horse and kind of hightailed it down to Lazarus' place? I mean, that's what Westerners think, but it's obviously not what Jesus was thinking. And Lazarus did die, but it only served to advance God's glory. But you see, that's the reason that Jesus had come to earth in the first place. It's also the reason that undergirds everything that God does in us and through us. If you understand that, then God's use of time will begin to come into focus.

The account of Jesus healing the woman with an issue of blood, you know, that's also an account of Jesus refusing to accept the urgency of a situation that screamed for his immediate attention. You know, when that poor woman touched Jesus' garment, he was already on his way to another emergency, one involving the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. So he's charging through this crowd in order to get to this daughter who is dying, and to the absolute horror of those around him, Jesus just stops in his tracks. He

stops and he turns around and he begins to minister to this woman who's touched him. Mark 5:30 says: *And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that power had gone out of him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to him, "You see the multitude thronging you and you say, 'Who touched me?'"* And he looked around to see her who had done this thing. *But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction."* While he was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, *"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?"* Well again, we know that Jesus used that time to glorify his Father by raising that little girl from the dead. You see, the glory was why he was there in the first place, and God's glory will always trump the urgency of the hour, and because Jesus understood that, Jesus ruled over time and refused to let it dominate him, unlike us who are ruled and dominated by time.

As I said, we are pathologically impatient. Banks going on to quote a number of other authors who see our preoccupation with time literally as a judgment from God. This is what he says. He says: "Most people have a deeply rooted dread of time and are afraid to look into its face. That is why they are constantly endeavoring to

forget themselves, ignore the past and avoid looking too deeply into the future. The busyness in which they attempt to hide from themselves and God, and the constant fatigue that accompanies their behavior, are more than just symptoms of an inadequate sense of self and a deficient vitality. They are signs of the judgment of God. As the Bible reminds us over and over again, those who turn away from God will find that their works are vain and that they exhaust themselves for nothing. This is what we see taking place before our eyes." You know what's scary about that quote? The scariest part of that quote is that that was written 30 years ago. That was written in 1983, for all practical purposes, before the Internet was even established. We know that things have gotten far, far worse. Most folks have found that their works are vain and that they do indeed exhaust themselves for nothing.

So it makes us pause and wonder, we just ask ourselves have you ever considered the hold that time has on you? You see, I seriously doubt that anyone in biblical times ever gave a second thought to the idea of tenths of a second or even seconds or minutes for that matter. You know, their day was genuinely broken down not into 1,440 minute segments but into four specific segments of hours apiece. Their day was broken down into morning, noon, evening, and night. Think about this for a second. There was no such thing in their way of thinking of -- as 10:30. They didn't

have a concept for 11:45. That just didn't register with them. Instead of a 40-hour work week, there was seasons, there were seasons of slowness and suddenness followed by seasons of work followed by rest of sowing and reaping. We look at Jesus' life, and his whole life was characterized by that same pattern. There would be this intense activity followed by a drawing away into solitude. There would be this suddenness followed by slowness. Jesus would minister until he was so exhausted that he would remain soundly sleeping while the boat that he's in is sinking in a storm, and again, we see that pattern of suddenness followed by slowness. It was the natural pattern that the farmer knew all too well. See, there was this season of early rains when the sowing took place amidst great suddenness, then there was the season of the late rains where the harvest followed, again amidst great suddenness. But in between those two seasons, there were times of great slowness. See, this was a climate that was well suited to the development of patience. James 5:7 says: *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.*

So against the backdrop of an entirely different way of looking at time, God's command to be patient, well, it seems natural, it seems reasonable. His history of dealing with us seems to bear that out. It's very different than what we go through, than what we

anticipate when we look at time. Noah is told to build an ark, and then God just sits back and waits, and he waits for over a hundred years until the floods come. That's God's idea of patience.

Abraham is told that his offspring will number more than the stars, and ten years later Sarah grows impatient, and you know, we all castigate Sarah for doing that, I just wonder if you were told that you would have offspring and ten years went by, you would start saying, "Hey, it's been ten years." Well, Sarah convinces him to go into his maid servant Hagar, and 13 years after that, God appears to Abraham to tell him that Sarah, now at age 90, will present him with a son that he originally had promised. That's a 25-year wait for a child that God had promised. God didn't apologize. In fact, he didn't send any periodic notices to Abraham explaining that there's been a delay in working out the promise. God simply told him what he would do and then two and a half decades later he did it. See, this is God's idea of patience.

Now, Moses goes into the desert. 40 years later, God considers him ready for ministry. Put that idea of God's patience into context. That means you are wanting to prepare for ministry, today you go into ministry, you come out what, 2053. Jesus himself spent 30 years of training for a three-year public ministry. My point is, do you think God might have a different understanding of what patience means than we do? You know, one of the most misunderstood

and misquoted scriptures about God's patience is 2 Peter 3:9. This is what it says: *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.* Now first of all, God is not preaching universalism here when he says he's not wanting anyone to perish. If you read the passage, he's already spoken about the destruction of the scoffers and the false teachers; God does not want them to perish, but perish they will. God hardly wanted his Son to be slaughtered, but he also allowed that to happen as well. Now this passage is speaking instead of God's patience, waiting until the very last one of his sheep enters into the sheepfold, and we know that because we know that God is speaking to his elect because it is specifically who the letter is addressed to. If you go back to the beginning of 2 Peter, 2 Peter 1:1 opens by saying: *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.* This is a letter written to believers. What is Peter saying? What he's saying is that God's patience is going to remain until the very last one of his sheep is saved, and what some consider to be slowness, God just considers to be patience. Now so far, that's been over 2,000 years. God has been patiently waiting for 2,000 years, which is for God the equivalence of what? Two days. Again, 2 Peter 3:8: *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with*

the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. You see, God's patience is clearly far greater than anything we can imagine. But he wants us to partake of his patience.

I said at the beginning of this message that God has for each of his sheep is purpose, a plan, and a pace. What's God's purpose? He wants to uniquely reproduce some aspects, some reflection of the image of his Son in your life and mine. *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* What's God's plan? God's plan is to use every single event in your life, the good, the bad, and the ugly to shape and mold you into the very image of Jesus Christ. Again, this is why he says: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

You know, I genuinely think we get the purpose and I think we get the plan; it's the pace that really throws us. And there's a reason why it throws us. We are pathologically impatient. We are the product of a culture that wants everything yesterday. We are the product of a culture that has no working knowledge of the biblical patterns of time. Slowness and suddenness are foreign concepts to us, and so for us, inactivity equals something very different than it equaled in Jesus' day. Inactivity today for us

means something's broken, God's not here, God's not listening, God has abandoned me. We are pathologically impatient with God. As I said, we have two completely different ways of looking at time: We have God's way and we have our way. And I can tell you with absolute certainty, God is not about to adopt our way. If we ever want to have the peace and power that God promises, we have to learn to understand time according to his way, and that requires both the patience to remain under a trial and the patience required to be slow to anger at the source of the trial. And even times, sometimes the source of that anger is God. Our anger is directed at him. James 1:4 says: *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.* We are the product of a culture that will not allow patience to have its work. And understanding the role that our broken concept of time plays will go a long way towards healing our broken notion that a God who doesn't respond as quickly as we'd like is a God who no longer cares. God cares more than you and I can ever begin to fathom. We have the cross as proof of that. But God will not be held hostage by our western notions of time, and he is willing to bear our frustration and even our anger to work his patience into our lives.

My sister had an incredible story to tell me a few weeks back about God's patience and how it's worked into his children. She had been

speaking with a woman that she had befriended. She hadn't seen this woman for about a year, but when she had first come, they kind of met and she was hurting on a whole bunch of different levels, she had some physical issues, she had financial issues, her cars had broken down, so my sister was driving her around just to kind of help her out. This woman was a non-believer. So as they're driving along, my sister pointed out to her where her old church was. She said to her, "This is a really great church if you're ever interested, I'd be happy to get you in there," and she found out right off the bat the woman just wasn't interested; church was not on her agenda. So anyway, they went their separate ways, and it was about a year later, my sister says she saw the same woman, she came up to her and she just had to tell her what had recently taken place. She was now going to church. And so she explained how that happened. She said life had been very, very difficult this past year, and at one point she was sitting in her car and she was completely shot; she was done. She said she was about to abandon all hope and she literally said she cried out to God out loud, "What do you want me to do?" Just as she said that, a car pulled in front of her that had a vanity license plate. The vanity license plate had one word on it; the word was "worship." What do you know, she took that as a sign. And being as it just happened to be right next to the church that my sister had pointed to, she decided to go to that church. So she's recounting the story in a

new comer's class, and she's telling people how she had come to go to this church, and a man in the same room overhears the story, and he walks up to her, and he said, "By the way, that license plate belongs to my wife." Well, the woman went on to tell my sister about this man and his wife, and as she's telling my sister about this woman, she describes her this way, she said she's a woman with long brown hair, a scarf around her neck, a rasp in her voice, and her name is Christie. You know who I'm talking about. This is the same Christie that we had been praying for for so long, for literally years. She is healthy, she's recovering still and she is still obviously ministering the gospel, but she is an example of how God works patience into our lives. You know, I look back, and it was almost two years ago when I recounted Christie's intense struggle with a hole that she had in her neck and the patience that God grew into her through that. You know, for those of you who don't know who Christie is, she was a dear friend of my sister's who underwent an emergency procedure. She had a tracheotomy because she had severe pneumonia, and that was the very beginning of her problems. She subsequently wound up having over 40 surgeries on her throat because there was an abundance of scar tissue that kept producing itself and literally started choking her from within. The more surgeries she had, the more the scar tissue would proliferate, and so she was literally being choked from inside by this growth in her throat. And for much of that time,

she had to live with an open trachea just to make sure that she could breathe, and of course she could only take in liquids, and at one point I remember reading to the congregation a letter that she had sent where she had to sit in the bathtub because the very fact of eating was so sloppy it got everywhere, it was only liquids she could take, and she said she would try to take those liquids in and they would dribble halfway out of her open trachea and cause unrelenting and unbelievably searing pain in her throat, and this is what she wrote. She said, "This has been a potentially fearful time as I felt life just draining out of me last weekend. But God has once again intervened and assured us that this is from his hand and is another critical step in answering all of our prayers. I have thought often about the temptation of the desiring answers more than I desire God himself. The greatest temptation for that is that when I am in the most physical pain. Will I rest in and trust in God when the physical pain doesn't end? Or will my flesh break through and shake its fist at God and say, 'I must have relief more than anything else?!' That is a critical point of wrestling and surrender."

Just to take a break from this for a second, I just want to point out something here. You see, Christie had cried out to God and God hadn't responded. She knew all about impatience with God. She knew exactly how it felt to want to shake your fist in God's face,

but she also knew how to patiently wait when patience was hard to find. Again James 5:7: *See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains.*

She went on to say this in that same letter, she says, "And sometimes it doesn't happen just once or gets settled in a few hours or days. However, I am resting in my Father's arms -- simply because he has once again been able to keep me rooted in his love, character and mercy when the pain threatened to undo me. Psalm 119 was my anchor this time. May we all desire intimacy with God more than answers to our problems. What a basic, but noble, fight for surrender that is." And she ends by saying, "We will let you know what unfolds. My hope is to be able to swallow liquids without choking. I saw a lady drive by the other day drinking a smoothie from a straw and felt jealous! Good grief."

James 1:2 says: *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.* Patience has had its fruit in Christie's life, but you see, it was able to grow there because she continued to trust when she felt like panicking or despairing or growing angry. She, like all of us, have been conditioned by

our culture's understanding of time to expect immediate answers or responses, to treat God's silence as abandonment or rejection. But God wasn't silent at all. God was engaged. He was answering her. He was healing her but on his timetable and not ours. Christie was just wise enough to see that. Her throat is healing still, and she can now drink a smoothie if she'd like, but God has done something in Christie's life that he could not do without first growing in her the patience needed to receive it. Her timing had to become his timing first.

James' flock was tired as well. They had put up with hardship and persecution and oppression; it was clearly beginning to wear them down. And even with the benefit of a more realistic understanding of time, they were starting to ask themselves what we would all ask as well, "Where is God?" "Where's God in all of this?" They probably could not have imagined that for 2,000 years at least we would all be tempted to ask the very same question, because God is still patiently waiting for that last dear saint to enter the sheepfold before his ultimate judgment is going to take place, and the question that they were asking can be summed up in one question that each of us needs to ask ourselves. And that question is simple: Are you pathologically impatient with God? You know, it's okay to admit that. I know that I had been there on more than one occasion. It usually happens in times of great stress like the

time that James' flock was enduring. We think that justice delayed is justice denied, and so far justice has been delayed for 2,000 years. Or has it? We all know that ultimate justice was publicly put on display on the cross. We know there the sinless son of God took on our sin and gave us his righteousness. We know there that by his grace alone, we are made fit for heaven, and yet we still grow impatient with his patience. But you know he loves us enough to bear the brunt of our impatience with him because he is infinitely patient with us. It is because he is patient that he is willing to wait as long as it takes for us to see our time frame as broken and his time frame as reality. You see, like the farmer, he too is growing something as well. He's growing you and me. *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. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Let's pray.*

Father God, I just thank you for your word. I know that we are the product of a culture that is incredibly impatient, a culture that has no time for anything, let alone time to let you play out your patience into our lives. Father, I confess the times that I have been incredibly impatient with you, the times that I have interpreted your lack of immediate response as abandonment or

indifference. Father, I just thank you for the example you've given us in people like Christie who know how to work through that feeling, work through that impatience, trusting that you are working something greater in their lives. Father, I pray that we would have the ability to be patient, we would have the ability to wait for the early and latter rains to come, that we would have the ability to trust in you through those times where we feel that you are abandoning us, because we know that you are a patient God, a God who loves us, a God who wants to develop that same patience in us, and we praise you for that in Jesus' name. Amen.