

Sermon Sunday 17th November 2013

Patience in Suffering James 5:7 to 12

As a child I used to save my pocket money and birthday and Christmas money in my moneybox and in Savings Stamps – only because dad said I had to put some of it in them but the interest was good even if I did not get it as I was made to buy Savings Certificates when the stamp book was full. However, the money left in my moneybox was mine and I'd save till I had enough to buy a new matchbox toy to play with or an airfix model kit to make and paint and then gather dust.

Patience in saving enabled me to do this but today we live in an instant society; an instant society from instant coffee to instant information. Another word, I suppose for our society could be 'the I want society or I must have society.' There seems little or no patience in people or society.

So do we view our Christian faith in the same way or put another way can we have instant Christianity? I'm not talking about that moment when you asked God to come into your life that's instant at that point but it is only the beginning of your new life. Your Christian life or faith develops by way of prayer, Bible Study on your own or in a House Group, joining fellow Christians in regular worship and most importantly living your life according to Gods laws to show to others that you by your deeds and actions are a Christian.

To do this or journey in our journey of faith we must have patience. The word patience comes from two Latin words – 'patior' meaning I suffer and 'sensio' meaning 'with sense' and put together it translates as 'facing suffering sensibly.' James in his Letter extols his fellow Christians to be patient; verse 7 'Be

patient then brothers until the Lords coming' He then goes on to show how a farmer patiently waits for his crops to grow; our Christian life is the same as the farmers plants, it must be nurtured as our earthly Christian life or journey is in preparation for that time when we to will inherit eternal life. But as James says in verse 8 'You too, be patient and stand firm because the Lords coming is near. We must be patient in everything we do as Christians because Christianity is not an instant fix; none of us know when the Lord will come again or when He will callus. We must therefore have to be patient and be prepared.

I referred to the must have society at the beginning. One symptom of this is people talking and gossiping about people who have things they want or perhaps jealous of. Unfortunately this just does not happen in society it happens in our Churches. How often have you heard 'I can do that better than them' or 'why can't they let someone else do it' and the gossip and talk that goes with it? It certainly can lead to cliques and groups and an undercurrent in the Church which gets in the way of true Christian life and development. You must be patient and while you think you may be suffering because you're not allowed to do something it is certainly nothing like the suffering those first Christians James is writing to suffered; many were persecuted and gave their lives as Christians. Patience is a recurring theme in the Bible. James refers to the trials and tribulations of Job, a man sorely tested by God seven times yet he patiently overcome this; look at Job 1: verses 21/22 'Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away may the name of the Lord be praised' Complete

faith in God from who all things come. Again in the Old Testament in Isaiah 8, God tells Isaiah that the Jewish people will suffer because they have turned their backs on God but then says in Chapter 9 those words we have heard so many times at Advent 'the people walking in darkness have seen a great light.' They, like us, have to have patience even in suffering like the Jewish people Isaiah was talking to. We must learn to trust in the Lord. So how do you do this?

- By prayer. Develop a daily prayer pattern or cycle in your day. Prayer is described as a conversation with God, thanking and asking. But unlike our instant society God responds in His own time and way. You must be patient and then be prepared to do what God wants you to do, which may not be what you prayed for.
- Study and read your Bible. Along with your daily prayer cycle read your Bible. There are many aids such as Bible Reading Notes to help this study as well as guiding your prayer's or why not join a house group to study, discuss and pray?
- Worship. You can't claim to be a true Christian unless you join in worship with other Christians. We all have different preferred styles of worship and fortunately we offer various styles of worship throughout the week and on Sundays but please don't say that a particular form of service or worship is not for me; try it you may be pleasantly surprised.
- Living the Christian Life. Now this I know from personal experience is one where you will experience pain and suffering and impatience. Our life must show our love for God and our fellow man. A Christian without deeds is not a Christian or put another way if you don't live according to Gods Laws you

can't claim to be a Christian. James tells us in verse 12 'Above all my brothers do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else' James here is not just telling us to watch our language in our daily lives, I think he is telling us our daily life must show that we are Christians and certainly swearing or blaspheming does come in that category. James goes on to say 'Let your yes be yes and your no, no or you will be condemned' As an aside, an example where the Bible has been used in modern popular music; Jimmy Cliff in the late 60's early seventies used it to make a massive hit. By being honest people of God in your daily life people will recognise this and respect you for it as will God. However you certainly may have to have patience with people to realise this but when they do there is your opportunity to evangelise.

So by patience, perseverance in faith, a true Christian lifestyle, bible study and prayer your life will change and you will grow as a Christian in faith enabling you to overcome all the difficulties you'll face in life until as James says 'the Lords coming.' Something we must all wait for with patience.

Let us pray. Lord God we ask for the patience of Job to accept that everything we have and will have is a gift from you. Please teach us to be patient while we wait for you to reveal those gifts and to learn how to use them Lord in your service.

Amen