Learning Patience In The New Year
James 5:7-11 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to James chapter five. And let's read verses 7-11.

JAMES 5:7-11 (NKJV)

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

P R A Y E R

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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: “The Look” (A Personal Story on Patience)

Normally I consider myself a pretty patient man.

- When I go inside a convenient store to pay for my tank of gas and I have to wait in line behind four or five people buying North Carolina State Lottery Tickets, I don’t like it, but I just keep my mouth shut and patiently wait my turn.

- If I’m standing in a checkout line with just two or three items and the person ahead me with a shopping cart full of items sees me standing there but doesn’t let me go ahead of them, I don’t get upset about it. I just patiently wait in line.

But I have to confess, there is one area where I have very little patience and that is when it comes to “bad drivers.” Now when I encounter “bad drivers” on the road, I would never think of “swearing” at them or making an obscene gesture. But sometimes, not always, but sometimes, I do give them one of these…...(shake head to show disapproval). I call it “The Look.”

Well some time back, I was headed home from Pitt Hospital. When I got to Washington I stopped at Food Lion to pick up two or three things.

After getting my few items at Food Lion, I headed home. About four or five miles out of town, I came up behind a guy doing about 45 in a 55 mph speed zone. Because traffic from the opposite direction was real heavy, I had to follow this guy for about two to three miles. When I finally got my chance to pass, I noticed as I pulled beside the slow moving car that the driver and his passenger were laughing and carrying on as if they were the only ones in the world on the road. So as I went by, I gave him “The Look!”

After passing Gomer and Goober, I was cruising along, when about a mile or two up the road, I got behind another guy that was driving about 30 miles an hour. This guy had a big sticker on his back glass which read: BE NICE! Do you think the Lord was trying to tell me something?
Well after the on-coming traffic cleared, I made my move. When I went around “Speedy Gonzalez” I noticed his seat was tilted back……his bare left foot was propped on the dash and he was driving with one hand as though he were taking a Sunday afternoon drive in the park. I looked over at the driver and you guessed it, I gave him “The Look.”

When I finally made it home, I told Linda all about my “frustrating” experiences with bad drivers. But like the old saying goes, “What goes around, comes around.”

The following Sunday as Linda and I were driving over here to the Church, I was momentarily distracted by something I saw in the field to my right and I veered off the road. Being the “expert” driver that I am, I safely corrected my truck and got back on the highway. And when I looked over at Linda, you'll never guess what she was doing? She was giving me “The Look!”

I think if we were completely honest, all of us would have to admit that we struggle to have patience with certain people or with certain situations.

Perhaps at times, you parents struggle to be patient with your kids.

Perhaps some of you struggle to be patient with an elderly parent, who can be very set in their ways.

Or perhaps there is a person or a situation at work that really puts your patience to the test.

One thing is for sure, you and I will face many situations that will test our patience in this New Year.

In our scripture text, James emphasizes just how important patience is in the life of the Christian.
In these few short verses, James uses the word patient or patience four times.

**Verse 7** - He admonishes us to “be patient until the coming of the Lord.”

**Verse 7** - He admonishes us to “be patient like the farmer” who waits on the rains to come.

**Verse 10** - James admonishes us to “be patient like the prophets of old who suffered for proclaiming the word of the Lord.”

**Verse 11** - James admonishes us to “persevere” or to “be patient like Job who faithfully endured unbelievable loss and suffering.

Now let me point out that in all four of these examples of patience, there is a great reward in store.

- For the one who patiently waits on the coming of the Lord, there is the reward of eternal life.

- For the farmer who patiently waits on the spring and fall rains there is the reward of an abundant harvest.

- For the Old Testament prophets who endured persecution there was the reward of God’s glory.

- And for Job, who patiently endured terrible loss and suffering there was the reward of ten more sons and daughters and new material possessions to replace what he had lost.
For the remainder of the message I want to share with you three Biblical principles that will help you and me to grow in patience in this New Year.

**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE 1: Learn The Value of Living By God's PACE**

1. Perhaps this verse from Ecclesiastes will sound familiar to you since we just finished our series not long ago.

   **Ecclesiastes 9:11 (NKJV)** I returned and saw under the sun that—
   The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all.

2. If you have ever watched a marathon race on TV, you will see thousands of people starting the race. But when that starting pistol is fired, one thing you won't see is any runners taking off in a sprint.

   You see, those marathon runners know the race is not going to be over in a matter of seconds or minutes, but rather the race will go on for several hours. And for that reason, the runners must pace themselves all through the race, otherwise they will exhaust all their energy and have nothing left to complete the race.

3. The Christian life is often compared to “a race” in the scriptures. Most notably are Paul's final words in II Timothy 4:7 where he says, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
4. One reason why so many of us lose our patience and get discouraged in the Christian life is because we are sprinting through life at breakneck speed, exhausting all our physical, spiritual and emotional energy.

   We must remember, The Christian life is a marathon, not a 100 yard dash. This is why it is so critically important that we learn to run the race at God's pace, not ours.'

5. Think of how many times in the New Testament we are commanded to “walk.”

   Romans 6:4 tells us to walk in the newness of life.
   Romans 13:13 tells us to walk decently and honorably.
   II Corinthians 5:7 tells us to walk by faith.
   Galatians 5:16 tells us to walk in the Spirit.
   Ephesians 5:8 tells us to walk as children of the light.
   I Thessalonians 4:1 tells us to walk as one who has been taught by the scriptures.
   I John 1:7 tells us to walk in the light as He is in the light.
   I John 2:6 tells us to walk as Christ walked.
   II John 6 tells us to walk after the Lord's commands.

6. Chances are some of the biggest mistakes and most regrettable decisions we have made were the result of not keeping pace with the LORD. Time after time in the scriptures we are commanded to “wait upon the Lord” and when we fail to do that we are asking for trouble!
ILLUSTRATION

Each year hundreds of hikers from all over the world venture to Africa's beautiful Mount Kilimanjaro.

The African guides who lead these hikers up the mountain have a Swahili chant they use all the way up the mountain to set the pace for the hikers. They chant, “po-lay.....po-lay” which in Swahili means “slowly.......slowly.”

7. To those of us who are rushing through life at breakneck speed, God is saying, “po-lay”..........SLOWLY.......SLOWLY. If we are to grow in patience during this upcoming New Year we must learn the value of pacing ourselves.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE #2: Learn The Value of Living In The PRESENT

1. Throughout the scriptures we are reminded of the importance of living life “one day at a time.”

In Psalm 118:24 (NKJV) David writes: This is the day the LOrd has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

In Matthew 6:34 (NKJV) Jesus commands us, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Even in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11 NKJV)
2. I know people, and you do to, who are absolutely miserable because they spend all their time regretting their yesterdays and worrying about their tomorrows.

Yesterday is gone forever and none of us are promised tomorrow. All we have is today.

3. Tomorrow belongs to God and you and I can't hold one solitary second of tomorrow in our hands today. So when we worry about what might happen tomorrow, or next week, or next month, it is just like allowing a thief to come into our house and steal today's joy, and peace, and happiness.

4. **PSALM 37:23 (NKJV)** says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.”

Do you know what that tells us? It tells us that even though God has our whole life mapped out, His will is that we trust Him “step by step” and “day by day.”

5. Margaret Storm Jameson, the English author, once said,

“We all spend too much time living in the past, feeling regret for lost joys or shame for things done badly. Even when our minds turn to the future, we spend an inordinate amount of time long for it or dreading it. The only way to live is to accept each minute as an unrepeateable miracle. Work at your work....play at your play... shed your tears, and enjoy your laughter, now is the time of your life.”
6. Bernard Berenson, the internationally known art critic, made this profound statement just before he died at the age of 94........

“I would willingly stand on a street corner with a hat in hand begging passersby to drop their unused minutes into it.”

7. One reason why many of us struggle with impatience is because we try to “bite off bigger chunks of life” than GOD intends.

If you are living in the regrets of yesterday or the worries of tomorrow, you aren't where God wants you to be.

8. This year may all of us learn to trust GOD moment by moment.....step by step....and day by day.

How Can We Grow In Patience This New Year?

Learn The Value of Living By God’s PACE
Learn The Value of Living In The PRESENT

Now here is.....
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE #3: Learn The Value of Living By Heavenly PRIORITIES

1. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

2. The apostle Paul says it this way in Colossians 3:1,2 (NKJV)

   1. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
   
   2. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3. One reason why many of us live in discouragement and defeat is because we have said “yes” to things that don't really matter and “no” to the things that matter most.

   How many times have we said “yes” to spending hours watching TV and “no” to spending ten minutes in prayer?

   How many times have we said “yes” to reading the daily newspaper or a magazine, and said “no” to reading our Bible?

3. The prodigal son couldn't say “no” to a life of sin and rebellion and he wound up in a pig pen with no food, no money, no friends, and no home.
4. The Rich Young Ruler couldn’t say “no” to his earthly riches and wound up losing his golden opportunity for eternal life.

5. One of the benefits of learning to live by heavenly priorities is that we learn to patiently wait on God's richest blessings instead of settling for the worthless things of this world.

C O N C L U S I O N

The late Paul “Bear” Bryant will be remembered as one of the greatest football coaches of all time. Shortly after his death his family found a crumpled up piece of paper in his wallet. By it’s yellowish color and ragged edges, the family could tell Bryant had carried the paper in his wallet a long time. As they carefully unfolded it, here is what they read:

“This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is very important, because I am exchanging one whole day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever. I want today to be gain, not loss......good, not evil.....success, not failure.....in order that I shall not regret the price I paid for it.”

Each day God gives to you and me this year is His gift to us. How we use each of those days is our gift to Him. May we grow in patience this year by learning the value of living by God's PACE.....and by learning the value of living in the PRESENT.....and by learning the value of living by heavenly PRIORITIES.