

# Oppression and Patient Endurance

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to read together from James chapter 5, verses 1 to 12. That's our scripture reading this morning. And one of our members, Douglas, is going to come and read for us.

Douglas. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming 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 labourers 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.

[ 0 : 57 ] 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. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath.

But let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Amen.

Thanks. We're working our way through the epistle of James, and we are in James chapter 5, nearly the end, penultimate week in the book of James together.

[ 2 : 12 ] James is the biological brother of Jesus Christ, and he is writing to Jewish Christians, which is very important for today. Jewish Christians that have been dispersed from Jerusalem all around the Mediterranean.

And James has the habit in this letter of grabbing you by the scruff of the collar and shaking you a little bit. And so he does that in this passage just like he did it last week. And in James chapter 4, verse 13, last week's text, he says at the very beginning, come now.

And that little English word, two words, is translated from a Greek word that appears nowhere else in the New Testament but right there in the letter of James. And it's sort of a little bit, slightly more aggressive way of calling on somebody to think.

And so it's like grabbing you by the scruff of the collar and saying, think with me, think carefully. And last week he said, think carefully. Are you forgetting God in the way you make your daily plans, in the way you plan your life?

Have you forgotten God in all things in your day-to-day life? So is the chorus of your life, the song of your life, thy will be done, Lord, or my will be done, in the way that you organize your day even?

[ 3 : 20 ] Now, today, chapter 5, verse 1, if you look at it, you'll see two little words, come now, the same two words in English, one word in Greek, that shows up in no other place in the New Testament.

So this is James doing the same thing again. He does it twice. He grabs us by the scruff of the neck and he shakes us a little bit and he says, think with me. And the issue today is that the tone changes completely, whereas last week he grabbed us and he said, come now, Christian brothers and sisters, church, are you forgetting about God in the way you make your plans in your day-to-day life?

But this week, the tone is very different and you might have noticed, as Douglas read for us, that that was not an easy passage to read. And as soon as the text opens, he says, come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are about to come upon you.

So this is a judgment passage and it's very different in tone and the way it feels to last week's passage, even though it's introduced with the same first word, the same first heading, so it's part of the parallel idea.

So there's some similar ideas there, James is telling us, but also something that's very different. And this passage has been controversial because it's troubling, because it opens by saying, come now, you rich, you wealthy, weep and howl at the miseries that are coming to you.

[ 4 : 44 ] And it's controversial because it's been interpreted in a lot of different ways. And the big question today for interpretation to really see what is God saying to us through James here, that you have to ask is, who are the rich?

Who are the rich here? So that's the question we have to answer if we're gonna be able to understand verse seven, be patient, brothers and sisters. If you don't know who the rich are, you don't know what he means even by the command to be patient in your life, in the Christian life. So let's think about that. That means that we can just do two instead of three points today. Verses one to six tell us about the world of the rich. Who are the rich? What's the world they're living in? And then secondly, verses seven to 12 turn to the people of the church and says, teaches us really about our mission in the world of the rich. Okay, so first let's look at verses one to six and think about the rich.

Who are they? And what kind of world is James talking about that they live in? Now, the instinct we have is to look at the word rich. Come now, wail, weep, howl, you rich.

[ 5 : 48 ] And think of merely the materially wealthy. So just apply it universally. That's what makes the passage so scary because every person in this room probably compared to the first century upper class person is wealthier.

We are all wealthier in our possessions. If you have a savings account, you are wealthier. Then the first century wealthy. And so that means that when you read, come now, you rich, weep and howl, James would most certainly be including probably all of us in that.

And saying to us, prepare for the miseries that are coming upon you. So is he saying, for being rich, you are going to be judged? And sometimes it has been read like that as if he's talking even to Christians who have a savings account, who have money, and bringing a word of judgment.

So I want to say today that that's not who he's talking about. He's talking about something far more specific than that. And the way that you can get at this, we can't, I won't spend the time to do this this morning, but if you went through every little word, every little phrase in verses one to six, you would go back to the Old Testament and find that James is quoting or alluding to one of the prophets in every single clause that he uses in verse one to six.

So just a couple examples of that. In verses one to six, verse one, he says, weep and howl. That's a phrase that comes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

[ 7 : 16 ] And we find that exact phrase in the Old Testament 21 times in the prophets. And it's nowhere else in the New Testament, but right here. Or a host of examples here. The day of slaughter, he says.

He talks about the day of slaughter. And that language shows up only in the Bible in Obadiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. So clearly James has the Old Testament open before him.

And he's reading the prophets and quoting from them in order to write this passage. He talks about the Lord of hosts or the Lord of armies. Isaiah quotes the Lord of hosts, that language, 18 times in just the prophecy of Isaiah alone, right?

And so you've got this real prophetic register coming out here in James. And he's clearly trying to basically take the language of the prophets and preach it to the first century.

And so he sounds like Amos. He sounds like Micah. He sounds like Isaiah. And that helps us to understand who he's talking to because he's speaking into a context that's very similar, using language that's very similar as the Old Testament prophets.

[ 8 : 20 ] And the Old Testament prophets also condemn the rich, the wealthy. But who were they talking about most of the time? And who they were talking about most of the time were people within the covenant community of Israel who had gotten wealthy and had gotten rich.

How? By making all their money through the religious system that God had provided in the Levitical code. By inciting a temple tax against the people.

The priests are who the prophets are talking about. The priests of the Old Covenant system and saying you better weep and howl you rich because you have been given a job by God to represent the people to God and bring God to the people.

And yet you have turned the temple and just into a money-making system. And you have oppressed the righteous, the people of God. That's who I think James is talking to here.

Why? Because remember, James is talking to Jewish exiles from Jerusalem, Jewish Christians who have been dispersed. And how are they dispersed? They were dispersed by the persecutions of the Pharisees and the scribes and the priests right after the crucifixion and the resurrection.

[ 9 : 31 ] And so now he's turning at the end of this book to those persecutors who had pushed the Jewish Christians out of Jerusalem and saying to them, you have turned what God has given you, to a religion of grace, into a religion of legalism.

And you've used it to create systems of injustice where you're oppressing God's people and stealing from them and hoarding wealth and doing all sorts of things like that. Now here's the diagnosis, the charges I should say.

Let me just point out to you a few of the charges that he gives. Look at the one in verse 3. In verse 3, the charge is, your gold and silver have corroded. And that will be evidence against you in the last day.

Now the problem with that is that gold cannot corrode. Gold does not rust. Gold cannot be tarnished. That's why it's gold. It's the best, you know, because it doesn't corrode. So what does he mean? Well, what does he mean?

It's a metaphor. Whenever you take your wealth, your money, your stuff, and you put it in a treasury, in a bank, in a cave in the first century, and you hide it, and it just sits there, and you accumulate, and you accumulate, and you accumulate, and you don't use the gold to do good by anybody, to restore acts of injustice with justice.

[ 10 : 43 ] You don't care about the poor. You don't, he's talking to priests and to people who have hoarded all this money and saying, your gold is corroding, meaning you're not moving it. You're not using it for anything.

You're not doing good by the people of God with it. So it's just sitting there. So the first charge is that of hoarding. The second charge he gives them is veiled, and it's in verse four, and it's hard to see at first, and I think this is why this passage is usually preached, what I would suggest is the wrong way, which is to say, this is just about being rich.

No, verse four, look down at verse four with me. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

He's talking about priests and scribes and Sadducees who have done what? Yeah, it probably is the case that they're not paying their day labors enough money. That's probably involved, but this is spiritual language.

You know, this sounds so much like Jesus saying, you have suppressed the harvesters of my field. What is that harvest? That's a spiritual harvest, meaning he's talking to the religious elite, the religious establishment of the day, who have stood directly against the Jesus movement.

[ 11 : 59 ] And they are suppressing the work of ministry, the work of the gospel all around the Mediterranean. That's who he's speaking against. And so this sounds so much like Jesus in Matthew 23.

Matthew 23 is a whole chapter of Jesus turning to the religious establishment, the elite of the day, and saying, you have turned the temple into a place of hoarding wealth.

Just listen to some of the language from Jesus and how much James echoes this exact same thing here. Jesus says, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence.

And in verse five, James comes and says, you are full of self-indulgence. It's almost as if he's quoting directly from Jesus as he talks to the scribes and the Pharisees. Woe to you, Jesus writes, says, blind guides who say, if anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing.

But if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. Verse 12 says, brothers and sisters, do not make oaths. And I don't have time this morning to explain that whole system, but the scribes and the Pharisees would require Israelites to make oaths before them to give them a

certain amount of money over time.

[ 13 : 15 ] And so sometimes people look at this passage and say, verse 12, why is he all of a sudden talking about oaths and how you use your words? It's because in the system of oppression by the religious establishment, they would get you to make an oath that would put you into debt, ultimately putting you in prison one day if you didn't pay it.

And he's saying, don't ever make an oath because these oaths that are being used are being used against the church, against ministry. That's why verse 12 is there and we could say so much more about that.

But you get the picture and the ultimate indictment in this passage is verse 6. Verse 6, it's a devastating pronouncement against the scribes and the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the religious elite.

And you look down at verse 6, you have condemned and murdered the righteous person. Now the translator smooth over the Greek here a little bit.

He doesn't say you have condemned the righteous person exactly. That does work, but it very literally says you have condemned the righteous one.

[ 14 : 20 ] And the righteous one is a title that was being used already in the first century for who? For Jesus Christ. You condemned and you murdered the righteous one.

What is he saying? He's talking about the cross and he's saying you scribes, you Pharisees, you Sadducees, you priests, you condemned Jesus himself and brought him before the Roman tribunal and had him murdered.

You see how much who he's talking to, how clear it is and what he's doing is he's associating the first century church with Jesus himself and saying now as you follow Jesus and are oppressed by the religious elite, turning the system of grace God has given into a system of hoarding wealth, you too are like Jesus, like the righteous one, receiving that oppression as you're scattered all throughout the Mediterranean still trying to do ministry.

All right, you say I'm not a first century scribe, I'm not a first century priest, I'm not a first century member of the religious establishment, how in the world does this matter to me? And here's how, this passage is a warning to everybody, really a call to everybody because the human heart, the human heart always drifts towards legalism.

And the way that this has happened in the first century and throughout the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament is that the priest and the scribes and the Sadducees have drifted towards legalism.

[ 15 : 43 ] And so this is a warning for us all. Here's how it works. First, it starts with hypocrisy in our lives. And hypocrisy is when you are devoted to God on the outside, but your heart is very far away from the Lord on the inside.

And then hypocrisy becomes legalism. And what is legalism? Legalism is when you use God's laws to earn God's favor. And you say to God, you stop believing really in a God of love and instead you take His laws and try to earn merit His favor.

And then here's where it really becomes insidious and this is what happened in the first century in the intertestamental period and this is what he's talking about here. When you create a system of legalism, a management system, you have now a management system to commit acts of injustice, to hoard wealth, to not pay your day laborers, but you justify those actions by your religious behavior.

So in other words, if your standing before God is based entirely on your performance, you can always find a ritual to balance the ledger. So you can commit acts of injustice against the poor on a Monday, but you can tithe mint and dill and cumin on a Tuesday and balance the ledger.

You can not pay your day laborers on a Wednesday and you can come on Thursday to the right feast and sit at the right spot and balance the ledger. You see what legalism does? Legalism allows for injustice because it creates a system of mere religion that allows you to really just to get away with anything.

[ 17 : 20 ] And that's why in the Old Testament the Lord said, God said, I don't even desire your sacrifices. No, I don't even desire the Levitical system. What do I desire? That you would walk humbly, that you would show mercy.

And that's exactly the issue. It's so dangerous. It's so dangerous for anybody because the human heart always drifts towards legalism and legalism can create a system of great injustice.

And so the real diagnosis here in the first six verses is what's the same as last week. That's why the passages are connected. Last week, Christians, we can forget about God in our day-to-day lives and start making our plans and drift away from the Lord.

But what is he saying here? He's saying, you religious person, you will be tempted towards legalism the more you forget that God is a God of love, a God of mercy. And the more you forget about that, the more you forget verse three, verse three he mentions, you have stored up your treasures in the last days.

What is he doing there? He's bringing the religious elite of his day, the legalist, the person of mere religion and performance, to remember that Christ is coming again. And he's saying, you've forgotten about that.

[18:31] You've forgotten that Christ is coming again. In other words, you've forgotten that there's more to life than this life. And so you're hoarding up wealth and you're creating a system of injustice just to get rich.

And it's because you're not thinking about the fact that this life is so short and eternity is coming. So don't store up treasures for today. Instead, just like Jesus said, store up treasures for eternity.

See, you're making this life all about this life. And that's what the legalist forgets and that's the real warning to the rich. Now that means, secondly and finally, that when he turns in verses 7 to 12 to write to Christians, to write to the church, he's talking to us about a very particular type of context. And so secondly, what is our mission as Christians according to verse 7 and 12 in the context, the world of the rich? And here's what it is. The world of the rich, which will be different for us than it was for the first century in this idea, this idea of the rich, is really just to say that all Christians at all times live in a time where ministry will often involve losing.

Where there will always be oppression against the Christian ministry. At different levels, at different times, to different degrees. Whether it's the religious elite in a time of Christendom or establishment, or whether it's something entirely different from that, far away from that in the time that we live in now, there will always be struggle in ministry and you will always feel like you are losing quite often.

[20:04] And so we look up today and we say, you know, I've wanted to see this relationship healed and it hasn't healed. I've wanted to see the church grow and it hasn't grown, we might say.

I've wanted to see this and that in ministry and it's just not happened. The time of the rich, quote unquote, in this passage, it's just the sense that there is, we're never going to live in a time where we don't feel like to some degree we're losing in the midst of ministry.

Therefore, verse 7, what does James, what does God tell us to do here through James? Now here's what he tells us. Here's what he doesn't tell us. He doesn't tell us, therefore, go and organize a protest against the establishment.

He doesn't tell us to say, well, you need to read more critical theorists and understand that you're just a victim. He doesn't tell us that. Instead, what does he tell us? He says, something so simple, so much harder than protest.

And that's, be patient and wait for the coming of the Lord. Be patient. The more you feel like you are engaged in ministry in this life and it's not going well, be patient and wait for the day of the Lord.

[21:16] So just like he pointed to eschatology to the rich and said, what is eschatology?

Eschatology is just remembering that the Lord is coming again, that this life is not all there is. And he said to the rich, to the religious elite, to the priest, you've forgotten that you are living in the latter days and that there's a next life coming when Jesus returns.

So he turns to us and says, be patient and the way you do that is by remembering Jesus Christ really is coming again. And that's the way you can actually grow in patience in this life.

Now he gives you three pictures to understand that very quickly, three brief pictures and that's always helpful when the Bible provides the illustrations so the preacher doesn't have to come up with any.

What does he say? He points you to the farmer in verse 7b. He says, see how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth being patient about it until the land receives the early and the late rains.

Now what is he saying? He's saying the farmer goes out, it's very simple, and sows the seed but then the farmer has to sit back and say, I can't make the rains come. And so what's his point about what it looks like in the Christian life to be patient here is that patient endurance is the discipline of doing your faithful work, your ministry, whatever ministry God has given you and saying, I don't

have the power to control the outcomes.

[ 22 : 39 ] I can sow but God has to bring in the harvest. And only God can decide if he will. And so we can sow in our city and see that the city is not experiencing revival.

And what do we do? Like the farmer, we have to say, I've sowed the seed and I have to be patient and wait. Only the Lord can bring the harvest. I have to wait for the coming of the Lord. That's the first way that we can be patient.

The second way he points us to is in verse 10, the prophets there. He says that as an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Now we really know that he was bringing the prophets in in verses 1 to 6 because he literally says look at the prophets as an example. That only helps us see how verse 1 and 6 really is a prophetic indictment against the rich.

But what is he saying to us about patience here? He's saying, well, it's hard to know because he doesn't really say that they did anything. He says, look at the prophets. They were so patient they spoke in the name of the Lord.

[ 23 : 39 ] And you say, well, what made them patient? What made them steadfast? And that's it. They spoke in the name of the Lord. So it was nothing special about them. It was that they simply understood that they had been given a message in the name of the Lord.

And so, in other words, he's saying, the more and more you realize that you have something better than gold, more, what does the Bible say, more precious than gold, the gospel itself, you can go out in the name of the Lord and sow the gospel and say, I have the ability to simply wait.

I believe in the gospel. I believe in the power of the gospel. I don't need anything else. I can be patient as I sow the gospel, just like the prophets were when they didn't see any ministry fruit for almost their entire ministries in the Old Testament.

And then the third and final when he gives us is from Job. He says, look at Job and you say, well, what about Job? You've heard the steadfastness of Job. You've seen the purpose of the Lord. Like the prophets, you look at Job and you say, how in the world was Job patient? Job, so ministry for us often feels like this. And if you have an active ministry today, I would imagine you may feel like this, that you take two steps forward, three steps backwards.

[ 24 : 55 ] You feel like you've made progress in sharing the gospel with a friend. You feel like you've opened up a pathway to a new ministry and then nobody comes. You know, you take two steps forward, three steps backwards.

It feels like that all the time. And he says, well, look at Job. Job had a big step forward in life. He was so blessed, but then ten steps backwards, absolute miserable life. He lost everything.

But then you say, how was he patient? Well, remember how Job was patient? Well, he cried out to God and when I read Job, I think, I don't think you're allowed to say that. Job, I don't think you're allowed to say those kinds of things to God.

He poured out his heart to God in ways that feels pretty irreverent quite often. And you see what patience is? It's all about the direction. So you might feel ministry frustration in the context of opposition.

And he's saying, look at Job. Job was frustrated, but what did he do? He poured it out to God. He went Godward with it. Honest prayer. Patience is expressed in three ways in this passage.

[ 25 : 58 ] How is it expressed in three ways? Number one, seeing the gospel as more precious than gold material possessions in this life. Number two, sowing the gospel like seeds into the city and saying, I cannot bring about the harvest, only God can.

I have to be patient. I have to wait. And number three, taking your ministry frustrations to God in utter honesty and saying, Lord, I wish more was happening.

I wish more was going on here. I wish revival would bring about, but it's just not. And that's what it means to be patient. This word, patience, that gets used here, Greek word, makrothumia, and makro means long, and thumos means blaze or fire, a burning fire.

So the word patience in Greek is literally a long fire, a long burning fire. And the reason it's the word patience is because it's saying that when you're a long burning fire, you're slowly coming up.

It means that, you know, you don't fly off the handle very easily. You're able to receive blows. You don't, you're getting the weight of oppression.

[ 27 : 11 ] You're getting ministry opposition in your life because you are doing the work of the gospel, but it takes you a long time to really get angry about it. And he says, that's the word that he

uses for patience.

So patience is really just this ability to endure when it's not going well and to have your gratification delayed. Delayed for when as we close?

Delayed for what? Delayed for the coming of the Lord. What does he say? Be patient until the coming of the Lord. How do you grow in patience?

How do you grow in patience, not in patience? How do you grow in patience? And he tells us, he says, you wait for the coming of the Lord. In other words, he's saying, you've got to have an eschatology. You've got to think about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

You've got to think about the one who is to come and say, that is what I'm working towards. And no matter what it feels like in this life, this life is so brief relative to, teach me to number my days, Lord. [28:15] Our days are so brief compared to what is to come when he returns. And so he's calling us at the end of this sermon and the end of this passage to have an eschatology. Remember what he said to the rich?

He said, you have stored up your treasures for the last days. You've made your life all about hoarding gold in a cave and that is your decision. And he turns to you and he says, instead, store up your treasures for eternity.

Think about the days that are to come. Keep going. Be patient. Wait for the Lord. Work for the good of the land that is yet to come. That's the real call and invitation of the passage.

Another preacher pointed me to an illustration this week that this preacher said was from C.S. Lewis. I then desperately tried to find this in C.S. Lewis and used my C.S. Lewis library to find it and could not find it.

Then I went to AI to say, is this anywhere in C.S. Lewis? And AI seems to say, no. But it doesn't matter because it's a good illustration. So it's not C.S. Lewis, I don't think, but it would come with more authority if it was him.

[29:27] But somebody talks about, just imagine a man who's 100 years old. We recently saw that in the news with David Attenborough, a man who's 100 years old.

And imagine this man thinking about his own death and there are really two errors you can make as you prepare for death and think about your own death when you're 100 years old. The first error is you get up in the morning and say, why should I plan for anything today?

I could die today. I'm 100 years old after all. Why go see a film? Why meet a friend for lunch? I might die today. I'm 100. And so this error is that you're so fixated on the end of life that you cannot live in the present at all.

That would be one error. The other error is equally serious but very different. And here's the error. The 100-year-old man who has not even thought about his death one time, therefore he has not made a will.

He has begun, finally, the book he's always wanted to write, he started it at 100 years old and it's going to be a 10-year writing project. He's never seriously reckoned with the fact that his life is so close to the end.

[30:41] So he acts as though death is not coming. He plans as though time is unlimited. And the writer, maybe C.S. Lewis, says, perhaps the gravest failure is because he will be caught completely unprepared for the thing that is most certain, his death.

Now, in the same way, what an individual's death is to that individual, the second coming of Jesus Christ is to every human being. And this is what that means.

The second coming is the guaranteed certainty by which you must live today. It's more certain than death. The second coming of Jesus Christ, the eschatology of Christianity, is that which is most certain that has got to organize what you do today, today.

And that means that on the one hand, this has the power to be patient but not sit around and do nothing. Right? Believing that the Lord is coming and that you can, you can pursue resources for eternity helps you with this idea of a holy recklessness.

And what is that? It's, it's to say, really, money matters to some degree in this life but not ultimately and so I can give it away. A holy recklessness with my stuff.

[31:54] You know, having an eschatology that all that really matters is what will happen when Christ comes again makes today matter so much because you can say, because I'm living for then, I don't need to hoard, I don't need to hold on to anything, I don't need to commit injustice against anybody else and use them like the rich did.

Instead, I can invest in what is to come because that's what really matters. A holy recklessness, an ability in ministry to take risks. Do you take risks in your personal ministry because you have an eschatology that says, I know what's going to happen to me when Jesus comes again.

I can take risks, I'm okay. On the other hand, and the final thing, is that it does not produce a carelessness about this life. The man, the woman who has the will made out, who knows what is to come, therefore still acts, still invents, still goes out into the world with passion and longing to do good.

Why? Because they know how the story's going to end. So patience, ministry blaze, we might say, to use that word through me, from the word patience, is cultivated by contemplating and beholding the second coming of Jesus Christ.

That's what this passage teaches. And so, I end with this. How can you? How can you? For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

[ 33 : 27 ] How can you? The righteous one has gone before you. The one who is most rich in blessing, the one who came down from heaven, who put away his heavenly life, his wealth, he has gone before you with such patience.

How do you become patient in this life? How do you, how do you really serve the Lord with passion, looking at the second coming, not sitting on your hands in the midst of ministry opposition? You've got to behold him.

You've got to behold the righteous one. You've got to look at the one who is so patient towards you at the cross, who gave away his wealth in every sense of the word to embrace utter poverty so that you might become rich.

What is real wealth? It is finding your identity in him, finding your meaning in him, living your life for him. And so on that basis, if you're standing before God is not earned, it's given by him, that means today you can know that you do not maintain your relationship with him by performance.

You can afford to go out and to lose things. You can afford to go to ministry and to lose because Christ will come again. Let us pray.

[ 34 : 39 ] Father, we ask that you would give us an eschatology, a vision of the end that would inform the way we live today. And we pray, Lord, that we would learn patience, the patience of Jesus, the righteous one, and the patience of the farmer and the patience of Job and the patience of the prophets.

And that as we look out and say, Lord, why haven't you brought revival to our city? Why haven't our neighbors come to faith? Why haven't these things happened in the way we long for? We would know, we would know that you are the one who actually brings in the harvest and we would learn. Lord, so give us a vision for the second coming today. Even as we sing now, help us to contemplate that reality, what that means, the enormity of the fact that life is eternal and that Christ will come again and help us to be drawn towards the gospel because of it.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.