

*Did everybody notice, the increase in Australia Post charges?*

*On the 4<sup>th</sup> January, the cost of posting a standard-sized letter, went from \$0.70 to \$1.00. And a large letter, now costs \$2, \$3, or \$5, depending on how much it weighs.*

*But the other strategy that they've implemented, to try and make some money (instead of losing it), is to slow their **standard** service down.*

*Our mail used to be pretty quick, really. And usually, we would receive a letter from Brisbane or Toowoomba within a day... But not any more. You see, most of us, are a pretty impatient lot – If I can't have it today, I expect it tomorrow, and if it doesn't arrive tomorrow, well that's just bad service.*

*And Australia Post, have a new strategy, that takes advantage of our impatience... The same day that they increased the cost of a standard letter by 43%, they also slowed down the **speed** of the standard service. They have added 1 to 2 days, to the delivery time of a standard letter. And if you would like your letter to arrive in the same time as it used to, that's no problem – you can just add a priority label to it, which will cost you an extra \$0.50.*

*So, the **real** cost of postage (retaining the same delivery speed of the letter), has gone from \$0.70 to \$1.50, which is a 114% increase in the cost of postage... And it'll probably work for them, because they are trading on our impatience. And as I said, "We're an impatient lot".*

If you're someone who's a bit impatient, you've probably prayed a prayer a bit like this one: "Lord, give me patience,

*and give it to me now!”* But the Lord doesn’t give patience – He teaches patience... And He teaches patience, by making us wait.

Today’s message, is about: “How to wait for Jesus.”

Over the last few months, we’ve been working our way through James. And there has been some very confronting, and challenging lessons, for those who would be disciples of Jesus.

Right from the very beginning of the letter:

- James has acknowledged the reality that there are going to be times of trial;
- there’s going to be times when our faith is tested;
- There’s going to be false teaching, trying to tear us away from the truth;
- We’re going to be tempted;
  - We will be tempted by our own desires;
  - And tempted by Satan and his demons;
- Christians will be persecuted (Especially by the rich).
- Those who have power and position in society, will take advantage of those who do not (which is often the disciples of Jesus).
- He warns us against the temptation of worldliness
- And he teaches us about how, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to very different values, to what the world lives by...

There’s been some very challenging lessons. And it has reminded me, of how blunt **Jesus** was, when He said that the

path of discipleship, is not an easy road. In fact, He said, that if we're not prepared to give up **everything** we have" – **even our own lives** – then we're not worthy of being His disciples.

Now, if the cost to being a disciple of Jesus, is so high,, why would we do it? Why would **anyone** ever even **start** following Jesus? Why would any of us **continue** to follow Jesus when things get tough? Why would we forsake everything else (even our own life), to hold to this one truth???

I'll tell you why: It's because it **is** the truth.

One time, Jesus gave a particularly difficult teaching, and many of his disciples turned away and stopped following Him. And <sup>John 6: 67</sup> .... Jesus said to the Twelve, "**Do you want to go away as well?**" And Peter said, "Who would we go to? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that **you** are the Holy One of God."

Why would **we** follow Jesus? Because Jesus has the words of eternal life, and we have come to know, that He is the **Holy One of God**... We are living in "the last days", and Jesus is coming back again, soon. The day of judgment, is just around the corner. Why would we stop following Him now?

And so, we **will** follow Jesus, and we will **wait** for Jesus.

Being an ex-Ag-College Instructor, I love agricultural examples. James says:

<sup>7</sup> .... 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. <sup>8</sup> You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

There are 2, very critical times, in the growth of a cereal crop: One is at planting, as the seed germinates, and gets its roots down and growing. And the other, is the seed-fill stage – from flowering until physiological maturity (that's when it starts to ripen).

And for a crop to do well, it really needs rain at these two stages, and James mentions about the patience of the farmer, waiting for the early, **and** the late rains.

The crop needs early rain, so that it can get its secondary roots down, and draw the moisture and nutrients from the ground. And then, during the seed-fill stage, it needs the **late** rain, otherwise, you might end up with a nice **looking** crop, but the seeds are all pinched, and only half-grown...

Well, that's all very nice and interesting, but how does that relate to the Christian life?

Well, when you first become a Christian, it can be a very exciting time. The Holy Spirit has been doing an amazing work in us – drawing us to Himself... He's convicted us of sin, and He's convinced us, of our need of a Saviour.

And we've heard the Good News, of how Christ died, to save us from our sin... And we've repented of our sin, we've believed in Jesus, and trusted in Him to be saved....

Sadly, some new converts only ever get that far. And they might follow Jesus for a little while, but then they lose interest...

But in this early stage, of our Christian walk, we are like a crop – a crop, that's needing to get its roots down... We need to get established... The crop, needs a good dose of rain in this early stage, to get its secondary roots going. And if that doesn't happen, the seedling will just shrivel and die. But if it **does** get the rain, the secondary roots get going, and the crop establishes, and the crop grows...

Now, the farmer (of course), has to be patient for his crop. From the time of planting, until harvest, is what? About 5 months....

And for most of that time, the crop is established, and growing, and you can't hurry it... The farmer can't plant his crop and then say "Right, I'm going to spend the proceeds", because the proceeds are still 6 or more months away.

*I remember my dad telling the story of an English-based company, who had bought a sheep station in Queensland... And the parent company were doing it a bit tough, and needed some cash flow. So they sent a telegram to the farm manager "Funds low. Commence shearing". And the farm manager shook his head, and said "Fools. We only **finished** shearing 4*

*months ago. Another 7 months until shearing.” So, he sent a return telegram “Ewes lambing. Unable to shear”. The next day, he received another telegram from England: “Postpone lambing. Commence shearing.” Now, I don’t know if that’s a true story or not, but Dad seemed to think it was...*

With farming, you can’t rush the harvest. You have to patiently wait. And of course, we patiently wait for Jesus.

But how **should** we wait for Jesus? James says, <sup>8</sup> **You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

Just like that crop has the early stage, and then the establishment stage – we do too. The trouble comes, when we don’t move from being a seedling in the faith, to being established in the faith... Do you understand what I’m saying?

Cereal crops have, what we call “a vegetative stage”, where they draw on the moisture and nutrients from the soil, and they absorb the sun, and they grow....

I know, sometimes when we use the word “vegetative”, it has negative inferences – you know, he’s just vegetating – inactive... Forget those negative inferences – it means “growing”...

To be established, in the Lord, means to be growing in the Lord.... And it’s not just a growing in the head – it’s a growing in the heart. And if you want to know what that means, James has pretty much spent the last 4 chapters,

explaining exactly that – what it means, for our hearts, to be established in the faith...

It's about practical discipleship. It's about knowing Christ – you know, having a relationship with Him. It's about knowing the **way** of Christ, and **living** the way of Christ...

It's about “knowing the day of harvest is coming”, and being established in Christ, and growing in faith and hope and love, and developing for that day of harvest. If I don't **establish** as a Christian, my faith, will wither and die. ...

Let me talk to the young folk for a moment. Especially those who are 12-21... Young people, these years are critical for your establishment in Christ... My observation has been, that from about 12 to 21 years of age, young people, who have been brought up in the church, tend to decide on and take, 1 of 2 different paths...

For some, their faith becomes alive... Up until now, they've been living off their parent's faith. They've believed in Jesus for a long time. They've been taught about Him from their infancy... But it suddenly becomes real to them. – “I can't just live off my parent's faith any more”. “This is something that has to be real for me...” “Jesus is calling **me**. Jesus is wanting **me**, to commit to Him. ” “I believe, and I will follow Jesus, as His disciple....”

And their faith comes alive. They start reading their bibles. Their prayer life comes alive... They have a compulsion – a commitment, to follow Jesus, and to serve Him...

But for some, they **don't** take that path... They think they still believe, but they don't establish... Everything else in the world, seems to get "more important", and Jesus gets a back seat... And so they don't establish, and their faith is like a young seedling, that essentially withers and dies...

And I pray, that your faith will come alive, and that you will become firmly established, in the faith...

Now, let me talk to some older ones... "Are you established?" Are you continuing to grow? Or do you feel that you've reached maturity, and you don't have any more growing left to do?

Remember, even in the later stages of the crop, we need the later rains, so the established crop, produces fruit... And I want to urge you, no matter how old, or how young you are, to draw near to God, and to "establish yourself" – this is something you have to do – no one else can do it for you...

I get disappointed, sometimes. In every church I've ever been a member of, I've been disappointed at how **few** of us, regularly get along to a Bible Study or a prayer meeting. Because I know, in **my** life, how beneficial, it has always been for me, to meet together with other Christians, and study God's word, and pray together, and grow together in the Lord...

Turning up for church on a Sunday, hasn't ever been enough. It's a relationship we have to develop – daily reading God's



word; regular prayer; meeting together with other Christians, to grow together in the faith...

I just wanted to share that with you – just how important it has been for me, and for my establishment in the faith. And I believe, it's important for all of us.

Let's move on.

*When I was a kid, we lived near Goondiwindi. And about once every 2 years, we would go and visit my grandparents, who lived between Amby and Mitchell... The cars back then, weren't as good as they are now. The roads weren't as good as they are now. Air conditioning consisted of "rolling the window down". And then the wind would pump through "woof, woof, woof, woof" ....*

*And 3 sweaty kids, one of them a perfect angel (me of course), would sit in the back, and niggle each other and poke each other, and annoy each other...*

*"How much further is it?" ... Andrew's pulling my hair ... Regina's hogging the window...*

*You've travelled with kids, haven't you??? On a long journey, everything seems to get just a little more "strained" ...*

And it's a bit like that in the church too... The Christian walk, is a long walk – it's not a quick sprint. And sometimes we Christians can start rubbing each other the wrong way... But V9 says:

**9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.**

Alright, Jesus is coming soon, and we don't want to be fighting with each other, and we don't want to be grumbling about our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when He comes... James is warning us, that this actually incurs judgment... (that might mess with your theology, but that's what it says). In other words, Christians, "Don't fight amongst yourselves." Just like Dad might pull up the car and sort the kids out... The judge is standing at the door.

And while we're waiting for Jesus to return, it's not always going to be easy to be a Christian. And sometimes the most **obedient**, are those who suffer **most** in this world... It's quite common to hear it said, "If you're doing God's will, everything's going to go well"... But that's simply not true...

And here, James says, "Take the prophets as an example". They spoke in the Name of The Lord. And they suffered because of it... And Job too – he had a terrible time. But he always trusted in God. How could they trust God, and continue to follow Him, through all of their suffering? Well, the matter was decided for them, because their faith was **well** established.

I believe, as our country gets more and more anti-Christian, those who **are** obedient to Christ, will suffer more and more, because of their obedience... But just like the prophets, when we remain steadfast, we are "blessed". We have something the world can never take from us – a promise that Jesus is with

us (through the tough times), and a saviour, who is coming, to set things right.

You know, when everything seems to go wrong – when we're in the midst of 'times of trial' - when we've been obedient to God, but then we've suffered because of it – it's not because God hates us. V11 says **the Lord is compassionate and merciful** And if we are established in the faith, we know that... And so, even if we **are** persecuted for being obedient, we know the purposes of the Lord, are compassion, and mercy... He's not beating up on us – He's just using us, to share His compassion and mercy... But the world that rejected Him, continue to reject Him (in us)...

It doesn't sound fair, does it??? And no, it's not fair. And that's why we have to hold on, because Jesus is coming back to sort it out. Be established in the faith, and grow in Christ, as we patiently wait for His coming...

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> last verse of the Bible, Jesus says, : Revelation 22:20 .....

**"Surely I am coming soon."** (And John responded with:)  
**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**

Can we respond in the same way?

Jesus says, **"Surely I am coming soon."**

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**