

Surrendering Your Marriage to the Enemy

James 5:11; Hebrews 10:36

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Make no mistake about it—your enemy (the devil) hates your Christian marriage and is seeking to destroy it. Why? A Christian marriage is founded upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible truth and is a powerful means God uses to build Christ's Kingdom now and to prepare a new generation of warriors for Christ's kingdom in the future through the holy seed with which He blesses it.

The devil is at work in seeking to rewrite through wicked laws what God instituted marriage to be from the beginning when He created Adam and Eve. Same sex "marriages" are not marriages at all, but rather are one of the means used by the enemy to destroy the divine institution of marriage (he also uses entertainment, schools, and books). It is not equality or human rights that these wicked laws seek, but actually the ruin of marriage as God designed it.

The devil also strikes at your marriage by suggesting to you that you do not have to put up with the "nonsense" or "garbage" you receive from your spouse, that you can surrender your marriage for the sake of your own peace of mind or pleasure, and that you need not honor the sacred promises you made before God and others who witnessed your promises. You may reason: "After all, no one could blame me for seeking to follow my own heart or looking for greener pastures with all of the drama and chaos I have to face at home."

Dear ones, today the Lord Jesus challenges us who are married (and all of you who are unmarried) that there are no escape hatches from the trials that all Christian marriages face. God gives two reasons (and only two) why a marriage may be dissolved: adultery and willful desertion which cannot be remedied by church or state. Short of that, you cannot surrender your Christian marriage to the enemy. You cannot give up because it is hard and difficult. You cannot enjoy the blessings of marriage without first persevering through the hardships of marriage.

Last Lord's Day we considered the sin of discontentment in your Christian marriage (and its remedy), today we will address the sin of surrendering your marriage to the enemy (and the remedy to that sin). The main points from our text are: (1) The Meaning of Patience (James 5:11); and (2) The Application of Patience (James 5:11).

I. The Meaning of Patience (James 5:11).

A. The Greek word translated "patience" in James 5:11 is a compound word, which literally means: dwelling under (i.e. living under trials, hardships, afflictions). This is a grace purchased by Jesus Christ for every true believer and implanted in their souls at regeneration.

1. **Biblical patience** is not surrendering or giving up under the heavy hardships, trials, distress, or conflicts that come to your marriage (or life). That is what characterizes **impatience**, not patience. **Patience** is persevering in hope of God's promise, love, power, and wisdom, even when the way seems dark. **Patience** is struggling, fighting, and battling against the desire to want changes according to your timetable, not God's (in your spouse or in your own life). **Patience** is waiting upon the Lord and fulfilling your calling, especially when it is difficult and hard, rather than taking an unbiblical shortcut. **Patience** is not leaning upon your own understanding (upon your emotions, anger, bitterness, or following your heart wherever it may lead you), but is rather leaning upon God's understanding and will from His Word.

2. **Patience** flows from looking to the Lord and His sovereign, wise, and loving plan for your life in whatever you face, and submitting yourself in faith, love, and obedience to abide under that trial in waiting for the Lord to bring His deliverance in His appointed time (Psalm 91:1-2). **Impatience** flows from the

sin we considered last Lord's Day: discontentment. For when you are led by discontentment in your marriage rather than by your contentment in Jesus Christ, you will become impatient and will want to see results now (or at least soon). The root of the problem with both discontentment and impatience is that the focus is upon that which is changeable (people and circumstances) rather than upon Him who is unchangeable—Jesus Christ. Like discontentment, impatience is a sin committed against the Lord. It is a sin that questions and doubts God's love, faithfulness, power, and wisdom. We must repent of this sin, rather than simply excusing it or blaming our spouse for our impatience (when he/she is not making changes). Your spouse may need to be sanctified in areas of his/her life, but your impatience is not your spouse's sin; it is your sin. You are not waiting upon the Lord.

3. We want to see the changes in our spouse right now. We want those changes in our marriage to happen according to our schedule not God's. Your hope in the Lord is revealed by your willingness to patiently wait upon Him. Abraham tried to hurry the Lord up by way of having a child (Ishmael) through unlawful means (through Hagar, a concubine), rather than through lawful means (through Sarah his wife, who was humanly speaking unable to have children). But after waiting 25 years, God gave to Abraham the son of promise (Isaac—through whom Christ would come).

II. The Application of Patience (James 5:11).

A. James 5:11 might be more accurately rendered, "Behold, we consider them blessed who are patiently enduring". The "Behold" refers back to James 5:10. Why are those who patiently endure blessed?

1. Because by patiently enduring tribulation they are proven to be true believers (Romans 5:3-4).

2. Because by patiently enduring trials they will grow in hope (Romans 15:4). Biblical patience looks in hope away from the present suffering to the blessings promised to them to those who are faithful (Hebrews 6:12). Those who suffer patiently with and for Jesus Christ will reign with Him (not those who merely profess Jesus).

3. Dear ones, you admire those in the past and in the present who patiently endure and persevere through the most difficult and trying of circumstances, rather than those who give up in the face of great trial? We esteem those Christians blessed who are willing to suffer the loss of all things and to patiently endure the most vicious attacks that are brought against them without forsaking or compromising the truth of Jesus Christ. This is the patience to which Jesus calls you in your marriage.

B. James next gives an explicit illustration and example of patience, namely, Job ("Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord").

1. Let us briefly rehearse the extreme trials of Job and his patience in bearing under them.
a. The suffering of Job was not for some unrepentant sin in his life, but was rather due to an unseen challenge offered by Satan to God. This was a battle in the unseen world to prove that God's grace of patience will cause His people to persevere in faith and hope through the most difficult and anguishing trials (even the most severe marital conflicts).

b. The Lord sovereignly granted Satan permission to bring severe hardships upon Job—except he could not touch his body. Satan destroyed all of Job's wealth which was substantial, and all his children. What was Job's response (Job 1:20-22)?

c. The Lord then sovereignly granted permission to Satan to bring upon Job whatever bodily affliction he wickedly desired, short of taking Job's life. Satan brought the most painful boils over Job's whole body. His wife turned against him and told him to curse God and die. What was Job's response (Job 2:9-10)?

d. His "friends" of misery then accused him of having committed some grave and serious sin for which he was suffering God's punishment, which was not true at all.

e. Although Job (under such severe trial) simply wanted to die at times, although Job went through periods in which he struggled with the purpose of God in his suffering, he nevertheless persevered by God's grace and he did not cast away his trust in the Lord, but pleaded for and looked in hope to God's deliverance (Job 19:25-27). Job's faith was severely tested, but he nevertheless persevered in patience and did not give up. In fact, there was a blessed "end of the Lord" in graciously delivering Job and rewarding him for his patience (Job 42:10).

2. Dear ones, the Lord was not taking a nap or on a vacation while Job was being tried in this fiery furnace. Our faithful God was in full control of all the events, only allowing Satan to go as far as He, the sovereign Lord, determined. Our gracious God set the limits and the boundaries, for He never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Your marriage may seem as though the mercy of God has vanished. The problems in your marriage may seem hopeless. That is the lie of the enemy. Look in faith and hope to the "God of patience" (Romans 15:5) who alone can grant you the grace and strength to never surrender your marriage to the enemy.

C. If the Lord supplied patience to Job to persevere under such severe hardship, He will likewise grant that persevering patience to you as well in whatever trial, hardship, affliction, temptation, upheaval that you may face in your marriage. The Lord is not dangling a carrot in front of your face just to tease you with the example of Job. Job was like you and me. If the Lord sustained and caused Job to persevere in patience, He will do so for you. To think otherwise is to act as if God is a liar, or that He is merely playing games with you by offering Job as an example of patience. We would never have had the example of Job for our great encouragement and comfort had the Lord not taken Job through this severe time of trial (there is no patience without hardship in marriage).

D. In the midst of marital trials the enemy suggests, "God could not really expect me to keep the promises I made in such an unhappy marriage?" Even more important than how you feel your spouse does not care for you, respect you, or show you the affection you desire is the binding promise you made before God whose name also you invoked:

I do promise and covenant to be a loving and faithful husband/wife to you through every trial and blessing, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health. I shall cherish, respect, give honor to and cleave unto you, until the LORD shall separate us by death, so help me God.

E. Dear ones, you may not surrender and give up on your marriage by walking away from it, but you may surrender and give up on your marriage by your threats to do so, apathy, lack of care and prayer, your unwillingness to work on yourself, and your unwillingness any longer to fight for your marriage in the strength and power of God.

1. "What's the use? He/She will never change?" Patience perseveres in looking to Jesus Christ and not to man or circumstances. There is only hope in the Lord Jesus—not in sinful, changeable people. Impatience is not simply a weakness. It is a sin for which we must repent.

2. Waiting patiently means that you must take your eyes off of your watches and your calendars, and rather cast yourselves upon the Lord and submit yourselves to His schedule, His plan, and His timetable. Waiting upon the Lord does not mean doing nothing. Your duty is to live a godly life before your spouse, speak the truth in love at the right time, and call upon the name of the Lord to work the changes that are biblical in your life and in His appointed time in the life of your spouse. Delays are God's appointments. Do not surrender your marriage to the enemy.

3. The Lord Jesus sympathizes with you, His beloved ones, who endure hardship and trial for His sake. He knows firsthand what it is to bear under extreme suffering and rejection by those close to Him. His heart is moved toward you infinitely more than the heart of a mother is toward her suffering child.

He is touched with your infirmities. Therefore, faint not. Cast not away your hope. Look to Jesus (Hebrews 10:36).

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