



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 5: 1-11

James

“Patience”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we do thank you for your goodness and your grace. We thank you for the privilege that we have to come together and to open the Scriptures, to read them, to study them together. We look to you to bless us in doing that. It is the way in which we’re built up in the faith and strengthened. The way that we learn about you. There’s no greater activity that we can engage in than doing that, learning about you and coming to know you better.

We have the great privilege of entering into a personal relationship with the Almighty God of the universe. The Triune God. And we thank you for that. It’s all of your grace that we’ve been brought into this relationship. You purchased us for yourself through the work of your son. You brought us to a saving knowledge of him and to faith through the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. And we now know you as our father and God, and we thank you for that and praise you for that. And thank you for the privilege, not only of being able to study your word, to read the Scriptures and examine them in some detail, but to also come to the throne of grace as we do at this moment and as we will do again at the end of our hour.

We pray that you bless us in all that we do. We know all things are in your hands and we are able to take comfort in that in all aspects of life. We’re reminded of that tonight in our text. And we pray that you would teach us these things and remind us of them and strengthen our understanding of it all. Bless our time. Bless the time that the young people spend this evening in their classes. And may all that’s done be done to your glory and our edification. We look to you to bless now. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] Our text is James 5:1-11. “Come now, you rich. Weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth eaten. Your golden and your silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure. Behold the pay of the laborers, who mowed your fields and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you. And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man. He does not resist you. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another so that you yourselves may not be judged.

Behold the judge is standing right at the door. As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endure. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings. That the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” One of the most difficult virtues to cultivate is patience. In fact, patience is a gift of grace. It is the fourth of nine virtues listed as the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22. It is produced by the Holy Spirit. It’s not natural to us. It doesn’t mean, though, that we’re not to put out effort to seek to develop that virtue, that trait within us. We certainly are.

All of those virtues are virtues that we are to be actively engaged in cultivating. But patience is a gift, and yet it is one that is developed by testing, by teaching and by exhortation. Patience is the subject of James 5:1-11. Because the Christians to whom James wrote this letter were being severely tested. The rich were oppressing the poor, oppressing the poor Christians of this assembly. Some of them had done work for the rich and they had not been paid for it. And for people in that day were poor – who live from day to day, lived from hand and mouth – that was a great trial. Some had even been killed. It is hard not to rebel and not to become angry in times like that, but James encourages patience.

By reminding them that a day is coming when God will settle all accounts. So our text really divides into two sections. In verses 1 through 6, James addresses the rich who have treated unjustly the poor. And then in verses 7 through 11 he speaks to the poor Christians who have been abused and he counseled patience to them. There are four sins on which James indicts the rich in verses 1 through 6. They hoarded their wealth. They withheld wages. They are self-indulgent. And they murdered the innocent. Wealth gives power, and the poor are without power. And the oppressed are tempted to ask the question, “Where is God in all of this?”

They see no justice in their lives. Their lives are often deprived of justice. And they wonder that and might cry out, “Where is God?” And so James gives the answer in this text. Day of Judgment is coming. That’s how he begins the chapter. It opens with all of the emotion and intensity of Michelangelo’s fresco of The Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. There he portrays Christ coming on the clouds, and the faces of men are in great dread, great distress. Well, we have that here. James says, “Come now, you rich. Weep and howl for your miseries, which are coming upon you.” The rich here are not rich Christians.

In fact, we see that from the fact, first of all, that they’re not called brothers. But we go down to verse 7 and then he does speak to brethren. So that is lacking from the first six verses of the text. These are non-Christians. And they are evidently men who owned large estates in the area where this church was. And they treated the poor unjustly. James doesn’t call them to repent, which is another indication that these may not be Christians. He simply announces the fact that judgment is coming upon them. Calvin comments that all that he says tends only to despair. He was not inviting them to repent. He’s simply saying, you’re going to be judged.

In fact, James probably was not directing these words to these rich people. In fact, he did not expect these men to read this indictment upon them. It’s doubtful that they would have ever heard these words. This is more of a rhetorical device for the benefit of the Christians who would hear it. And intended to encourage them with the promise that justice is coming. And the same time, to dissuade them from bitterness and rebellion. Now having said that, it doesn’t mean that repentance couldn’t result from this. A rich man in that area might happen into the church. And he might hear this address, or he might have a copy of this given to him.

He might read it. And it might occasion a change of heart, a turning from his sin and a turning to Christ. Jonah didn't go to Nineveh preaching repentance. He went to Nineveh preaching judgment. It's a very simple sermon that he preached. And yet, men repented. And there was a great turning in Nineveh. And it put off the judgment that was to come. So that may be the consequence of what James writes here, but that was not his intention. He wasn't calling them to repentance. He was announcing judgment on these individual. And in doing so, he was exposing the deceitfulness of the riches in which they had trusted.

He shows that wealth gives false hope and false security. Their wealth is going to be swept away and their sinful use of it is going to be judged. Verses 2 and 3. “Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted. And their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure.” James considers the wealth in a three forms.

Food, garments and precious metals. They have hoarded all of this stuff and they've hoarded it for themselves. They can't use it all, and so just molders and rots. That's a terrible sin. Calvin pointed out that God has not appointed gold for rust, nor garments for moth, but on the contrary, he has designed them as aids to human life. That's what they're for. They're to help others. They're to be a benefit and a blessing in the things of this world, in life itself. But these men had not used it in that way at all. They'd used it on themselves, and what they couldn't use on themselves – what they hoarded up – just rotted away.

So all of these things – moth-eaten clothes and rusty gold – will be a witness against these people in the coming Day of Judgment. Proof of their selfish abuse of what God had given to them. And it is a gift from God that they had. James had earlier pointed out at the beginning of his epistle that every good and perfect gift comes down from above. Well that's true for us, but that's true for the worldly man as well. The unbelieving man. Everything that he or she has is a gift from God. And an account will be given as to the stewardship that was applied to it.

So this would be a witness against them. They'd hoarded all of these things up for their own pleasure, for their own prestige. Clothing, lots of wealthy clothing. That was a sign of wealth, a sign of prestige in the ancient world. These kinds of embroidered and well decorated garments that were characteristic of what the rich

wore. You see that in the Old Testament. Remember Samson and one of the challenges of Philistines to him about his riddle. I think it was the riddle about the lion that he had seen. And the proposal was that they would have a certain number of garments given to them if they got the riddle.

They did because his fiancée had given them the answer. And so they went out and slew a bunch of Philistines and gave them all these garments. And then there's Achan earlier in the history when they conquer Jericho. One of the things that caught his eye was a Babylonian garment. Well these were signs in the ancient world of great prestige, great wealth. People would have these very opulent garments. And they had great value. And they would be passed down as heirlooms. And people would store them up. They'd store them up and they'd just get moth-eaten. They weren't used. They were of no value.

Just lots and lots of clothing that was theirs that they didn't want to part with. They didn't last. Gold and silver. Rust, he says. Well we know that gold and silver actually don't rust. And James knew that as well. But this is a description of their treasure and way of saying that, in the future they will have no value to them. What they place great value and what they treasure up will someday be worth nothing. It will just rust away and become worthless. And I think he's saying something else as well because when metal is left exposed to the elements, when it's not used, when it's not cared for, it corrodes. It becomes rusty.

And here rust speaks of the idleness of their wealth. And that rust is going to be a testimony against them. In the judgment day, it will witness against them. It will indict them for their foolish use of wealth, their lack of use for it in the proper way. And that rust, he says, will eat on them. It will consume your flesh like fire. Well that may suggest that their guilt will gnaw on their consciences. Forever they will feel that guilt. They will suffer endless remorse for their sins, for their great opportunities, the great blessings that God had given to them, and how they squandered it all and they abused it, and they'd actually injured people as a result of that.

They will feel deep, eternal remorse for their selfishness. That must be a great part of hell. I was reading in the Gospels, reading Judas's response. How he took the 30 pieces of silver and then he realized what he had done. He goes back to the priest and he says, "I've betrayed innocent blood." They want to have nothing to do with it. And so he throws the money in the temple and he goes out and hangs himself because

of his deep remorse. The thing is, that wasn't going to relieve his remorse at all. His hell, in part, would be an eternity of deep remorse.

But remorse can be so awful that it drives a man to suicide. And that's just the beginning of it. That's a large part of eternal perdition. And these men are described as men whose flesh will be consumed by the rust of these metals. Which may indeed be a way of saying remorse is going to eat away at their soul for all eternity. They are men who let themselves be deceived by their wealth. There is no future for worldly wealth. Only rust and moth and mold. It can't help the rich. It won't last. And when it really counts, it won't be there for them.

It won't do anything for them. The Day of Judgment, they're wealth will be absolutely worthless. So when it really counts, riches don't help. We all value those things. But the reality is, they are of no benefit to us when we really need those things. Well this past week, my wife and I went over to Fort Worth to the Kimbell Art Museum, which hosted an exhibit of the art collection of the Stroganov family, which was an old Russian family that was fabulously wealthy. It was all swept away in the Bolshevik revolution. But very, very wealthy family. In fact, there was an old saying in Russian. “Richer than the Stroganovs, you'll never be.”

Over the centuries, they accumulated enormous amounts of wealth and they invested a lot of it in art. Particularly Alexander Stroganov, who was a friend of Catherine the Great, and sometimes her competitor for purchasing fine things. What got me interested in the exhibit was a review of it about a week or two ago in the Wall Street Journal. And in it there was a story about Alexander Stroganov that is almost proverbial. He was a great patron of the arts.

He bought much art. And he was not altogether selfish in his use of his money. He was a patron of the arts. He supported young artists. He helped them develop. He gave them clothing and scholarships for further training. But art was his love. And he even built a large gallery in his palace. And they had pictures – I think they were inked drawings – of him sitting there admiring his art. And he had great paintings. Rembrandts and Rubens and van Dyck. Lots of Dutch paintings, French paintings, Italian paintings.

Some of the greatest art in the world was housed there in his gallery. And it is said that he spent his last hours in a chair in that gallery admiring his collection. Obviously he had a great love for that. That was the love of his life. The problem is,

his art didn't love him back. It gave him no help in his final hours. It couldn't hold back his appointment with death. And when his appointment with death came a couple hours later, he had to leave it all. He couldn't take any of it with him. Now there's nothing wrong with being rich. There's nothing wrong with collecting art. The problem is when it becomes the most important thing.

I'm not trying to impute that to him and put him in this context of what James is speaking of. But I thought of how foolish it is to invest one's life in great artworks. You can't take it with you and it does you no good. It doesn't help. The riches and the pleasures of the world promise far more than they can give. And in the end, they always fail the person who trusted in them. That really is the problem with wealth. It blinds a person to spiritual interests, to the things that really last, to the things that are really important. And that's the danger of it.

And so there is, in this indictment on the rich man and the description of the way of his wealth – that it's all going to rot, it's all going to be consumed, it's not going to last – there, is that, a warning to the Christian who may set his heart on those things. And that has been a problem that James is dealing with earlier in chapter 4. The whole problem of worldliness. And so this, in a sense, is a continuation of that warning that James began in chapter 4. Riches don't last. And the love of them can, and often does, occasion sin and judgment. It certainly did for these. Their abuse of wealth will be a witness against them.

And they will give an account and they will suffer for that. Another of the sins that the rich had committed is given in verse 4. They defrauded the poor of their wages. They didn't pay them the work that they had done. “Behold, the pay off the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you. And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” That description that James gives sounds like the Lord's words to Cain back in Genesis 4:10. “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.”

And then later on in chapter 18 the Lord said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great.” The point is, God knows what men do. Sin doesn't escape him. It's like a voice that is crying out. And we don't hear that voice, but God hears that voice. Sin is committed in secret and it's heard in heaven. And these rich man had swindled the poor out of the wages that were due them. They probably

found some technicality on which to do that. The men worked all day in the heat of the fields and they came to the end of that workday. And the rich man found some way in which to withhold the wages.

Some technicality in which he was able to refuse the pay that was due to them. That may, in part, be how these men gained their wealth. Became wealthy by defrauding others. And the poor had little recourse. There's no source of help for these men. At least not on earth. They don't have anyone to appeal to. But they did have help. And that help was in heaven. The Lord Sabaoth. The Lord of host. The Lord who commands the armies of heaven.

And this is a way of saying, God Almighty knows and he's angry. Well the third sin is given in verse 5. Self-indulgence. They had lived in luxury. They had led a life of wonton pleasure. They lived soft, selfish lives. At the expense of others. So James says, “You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.” What a picture that is. It's like the fatted calf for slaughter. And what they fattened themselves with is guilt. And they are deserving of the judgment that will come. The more they sin, the more they merit that wrath that will fall.

The fourth sin of the rich is given in verse 6. Murder. You have condemned and put to death the righteous man. This is judicial murder. The rich are powerful. They control the courts. They're able to secure a verdict against the poor man. And to have him put to death. This is something of what we see back in 1 Kings 21, where Jezebel had Naboth set up and murdered in order that Ahab, her husband, could have Naboth's vineyard. And there are many cases of that.

James is citing one here. He doesn't give us the specifics of it, but that had happened in the congregation to whom he was writing. James says, He does not resist.” Now he, the righteous man, does not resist either because he's powerless to resist, but more likely what he's saying is he doesn't resist in that he follows the instruction that the Lord gave. And the Lord told us, back in Matthew 5:39, not to resist the evil man but to turn the other cheek. And this is what the righteous man did. And he was struck down. He was slain judicially.

The courts had condemned him and he's put to death. Now these are the kinds of things that lead to reprisals. This kind of injustice, it has sparked revolutions in history. And certainly has provoked vengeance. And that is the natural course of events that one might expect to follow from this kind of injustice. But James counsels



against that. James counsels patience in verse 7. Therefore, he says, that is in light of all of these facts, in light of the fact that God knows what the wicked man is doing, and the fact that God has set a day of judgment, James says, be patient until the coming of the Lord.

The word for patience here is literally “long tempered”. Long in wrath. And it is the opposite of being short tempered. Now it doesn’t call for a passive attitude, as a kind of attitude of resignation. But it calls for restraint. And that takes great effort. That takes great deal of activity. One of the older commentaries on the book of James, James Ropes noted that this word is rare in secular Greek. Now that’s because this is a virtue that is not natural to the natural man. And so when the Greeks wrote about virtuous, this isn’t one that they included because they didn’t have it and they didn’t think of it as a virtue. Vengeance. That’s a virtue.

That’s what men ought to be doing. Getting their pound of flesh. Getting things even. Taking matters into their own hands. And the ancient Greek heroes were men who did just that. That’s the natural response. But James counsels patience. Be long tempered. Until the coming of the Lord. That is when Christ will judge the world, when he will establish his kingdom, when he will set everything right. It will be a time of great blessing. Blessing beyond our comprehension. A time of great reward for God’s people.

And reward for faithfulness. Reward for patience in this time of great trial. And so he says all this. And he says this to encourage them to do just that. But James knows how hard it is to be patient. He knows how difficult that is, particularly in the face of such injustice as what these men, these families, have suffered. Not being paid, living on the edge of poverty, and then being deprived. And some of them being put to death, murdered unjustly. And so he gives support to his exhortation with an illustration from the farmer. Many of these would understand that they worked in the fields. They knew farming.

And so he writes, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it until it gets early and late rains. The farmer labors for his crop. He labors hard for the crop. He looks forward to it. He looks forward to it greatly. And when that crop is going to come in, he can feed his family, feed himself and obtain some payment for it. But he knows that there is an interval of time in which you really can’t do anything. He can’t get out there and talk to the wheat and have it grow

a little faster. There’s nothing he can do. He just has to wait for the growth to occur. That takes patience. But patience that will be rewarded with the harvest. And so the farmer waits. He waits for the early rains of October and November and into December.

And then he waits for the late rains of April and May. He’s able to be patient because he knows that the harvest is coming. And the reward will be great for the Christian who does that as well. So in verse 8, James repeats his exhortation. “You too be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” Now again, being patient doesn’t mean be resigned to your situation or submit to fate. Something like that. It calls for action. It calls for discipline. And that’s indicated here by what James says.

He says, “Strengthen your hearts.” This is something that you are to do. Not simply to wait, but you are to strengthen the inner man. Strengthen your resolve in this way. In other words, take matters in hand and develop an attitude of firmness, the resolve to be what you are to be. A patient long-suffering individual. Well that can only be done by looking to the future. Confident that the Lord is coming. If we did not have that hope – if we did not have the hope that there is a future to this life, that the wrongs of this life will be corrected – we would have no hope at all. The vast majority of people in this world would be in utter despair. Many are because they don’t understand the future.

They don’t believe in the one who controls the future. But we have this hope. And so we are not in despair. And James is reminding them of that great hope of the future, the coming of the Lord. And he reminds them of that by saying that he is near. Now James didn’t know the date of the Lord’s return. It is a dateless promise. We are not to speculate about the date. We’re not to set dates. The Lord said, “Of that day or hour, no one knows. Not even the angels in heaven nor the son, but the father alone.” Mark 13:32. So we’re not to speculate about that.

We’re not to set dates. And the Lord warns against that. But then the Lord goes on to tell the disciples to be expectant. To live in light of that coming. And hope in it. He says, ‘Take heed, keep on the alert, for you do not know when the appointed time will come.’ Be on the alert. And so that’s the way we are to live. Live our lives with the real hope that Christ may come in our lifetimes, he may come very soon. That’s the hope that we have. And that hope has a sanctifying affect upon

us. That's the teaching of Paul, of Peter, of John. The teaching of James. It's the apostolic teaching.

We are to be looking forward to that day. Knowing that these things will pass away. And something infinitely better will replace it. And so James says, “Do not complain, brethren,” this is verse nine, “against one another.” Evidently that was happening in the church. They were being oppressed and they're oppressed by the powers that be. They're oppressed by the powerful rich men of the community. There's nothing they can do about it. The courts seem to be in the pockets of these individuals. If they resist, they're murdered.

And so what happens is a great deal of frustration. And they began venting on one another. On their families and on other Christians. And James is saying that's sin. Not to do that. And he warns them of consequences. Don't complain so that you yourselves may not be judged. “Behold,” he says, “the judge is standing right at the door.” And the door that he's speaking of may be the door into this world, into time, into back into history as we know it.

Entering when the Lord's return. Or it may have the idea about the door of the judgment hall. He's standing right there and judgment is about to happen. They were to realize that he is nearby. He is coming. And he may be coming very soon. And that should be a comfort, but also a caution. It is a warning. The fact that Christ is coming should encourage patience. And that's what he has been encouraging. His reward is with him. It's the great promise we have at the end of the Bible. The book of Revelations, chapter 22.

“I'm coming and my reward is with me.” So that's a great encouragement. But the fact that he is a judge and that he will judge us for what we do and what we say should discourage sinful behavior. So on the one hand, it's a great encouragement. On the other hand, it's a discouragement. Or it should be an incentive not to sin, not to complain, not to vent on others. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” We must all give an account of our actions. Whether good or bad. And so how we live is very important.

We're to live, as Paul tells us to live in Philippians 2:12-13, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” That's what's to characterize our life. Fear and trembling. We're to trust in the Lord completely. We're to have absolute confidence

in him. But there's a trembling to it. A great caution to it. So confidence, but caution. That's how we live before the Lord. Now in verses 10 and 11, James returns to their circumstances, their hard situation of oppression, to give further encouragement. This time with some godly examples of patience. Suffering for God's people is not unusual. And he reminds them of that with these various examples. The first is out of the prophets.

They ministered under difficult circumstances and they suffered patiently. James says that they spoke in the name of the Lord. So God honored them greatly. They were his mouthpiece. There could be no greater honor in Israel than to be a prophet and speak the word of God. And yet, while he honored them, blessed them in that way and used them greatly, that didn't keep them safe from harsh treatment. In fact, just the opposite. Their work as a prophet provoked opposition from the world, from the unbelieving in Israel. Elijah is an example of that. He was threatened and he was pursued by Ahab and Jezebel.

Jeremiah's another example. And maybe that's the one that James really has in mind. He was the reluctant, but very faithful, prophet. A patriot who preached an unpopular message and suffered rejection by his countrymen. He is called the weeping prophet. Jeremiah was a very sensitive man. He cared very much about his people. And he took the abuse very personally, as it was intended to be taken. He was beaten. He was mocked. He was put in the stocks. He was thrown into prison. He was dropped into a muddy cistern.

He suffered physically. He suffered emotionally over the course of his ministry, which is a long ministry, so it was a long life of suffering abuse. And finally it ended with him being taken down to Egypt against his will. That's how it ends for Jeremiah. But he remained faithful. He didn't drop out. He didn't stop being a prophet. He was tempted to do that, but he said the word of God's like a fire in his bones and he has to speak. So he was a faithful man, even in the most difficult of times. He didn't respond to his persecutors with bitterness. That's the story of the prophets. Not just Jeremiah, but the prophets. Stephen said, “Which one the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”

That's what Israel did. It's their history. Persecuting the prophets. Now if that happened to the prophets, what should we expect, who are in a lesser position than they? If the greatest of the servants of the Lord experience hostility from the

world, aren't we do expect it as well? Their faithfulness is a mark of their character. The goodness or the trueness of their character. And so they're to be a model for us. An inspiration, so to speak, of us. I'm how we're to respond when we're mistreated. And so he sites them for that example. Sites their patience, sites their constancy, their endurance under trial.

Which is something that we all admire. When a man suffers, when he endures and is faithful in the midst of it, we admire that greatly. That's what James says in verse 11. “We count those blessed who ensure.” The prophets did that under great pressure, under great hardship and trials. Others have done that. And the next example that James gives is very specific. He speaks generally of the prophets, but now in verse 11 he speaks up one person in particular, Job. “You have heard of the endurance of Job,” he said.

King James Version has it, “You have heard of the patience of Job.” And a great theme here in this section is patience. But the word that James uses here is different from the word translated “patience” earlier. This word means endurance. Now Job really didn't show a great deal of patience in the book of Job. He was distressed by his situation. And he had impassioned outbursts against his shallow friends who'd come to be his comforters and were just the opposite. What Job did show was perseverance. He never lost faith in God. He believed, even when he couldn't understand. He knew there was an answer, he just didn't have the answer. And this is what he cried out for all through the book.

But we see his endurance. His constancy. All the way through. From the very beginning when he gets the bad news about his family, about his children, about his possessions, his livestock and all. Chapter 1 he says, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Well the Lord took more away. He took away his health, and he's stricken with boils and he's sitting on the ash heap. And his wife comes.

And rather than be encouragement to him, she's just the opposite. She tells him, curse God and die. And his response was, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” And then we're told in all of this, Job did not sin with his lips. To his friends, he gave the counsel, who gave him the bad counsel, he said, “Though he slay me, I will hope

in him.” In chapter 19, versus 25 and 26, his faith is given in the statement, “I know that my redeemer lives. And at the last, he will take his stand on the earth, even after my skin is destroyed. Yet for my flesh, I shall see God.”

That was Job’s faith, his constancy. He endured all of that and remained true, faithful to the Lord. Job was grieved by his losses and deeply troubled by all that happened. It didn’t seem right, but he endured to the end. Never stopped trusting in the Lord. And the Lord greatly blessed him. Now that’s what James said. You have heard of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. And Job learned that in the end. He learned a great deal. His possessions were restored to him.

A new family was given to him. In fact, his possessions were doubled. He had much more than he’d ever had. And he was given a deeper understanding of God’s purpose. He learned more about God through all of that, and through what God said to him at the end – because God does answer Job. And then Job was given a better understanding of himself. And he was able to say, “My eyes sees you. Therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes.”

So God blessed Job in many ways, not the least of which was a deeper knowledge of God himself and a better understanding of Job himself. The assurance that James gives is that nothing is wasted on God’s people when they endure. When they persevere in the faith. In the end, great blessings come. And we experience God’s mercy. We experience his compassion. And so we’re not to rebel against the circumstances of life. We’re not to expect just pleasant circumstances. That’s not what God has planned for his people. Look at your life. And for the most part, the people in this church, the people in this nation, have very easy lives.

The world around us is full of chaos. There’s lots of evil that takes place under evil governments. And the history of the church has been marked by a great deal of shedding of blood. God has spared us of that. But we can expect difficulties in this life. We should expect that. Not be surprised if they come. Not be surprised if we’re just overtaken by hard circumstances. Certainly not surprised if we witness for Christ and we experience oppression and persecution. So we’re not to rebel against those circumstances.

We’re to know that they’re a part of life. They’re part of God’s plan for his people. We’re not to complain and we’re not to fight with our brethren. We’re not to

become angry with God. We're to be patient and we're to endure to the end. And the end will come. One way or the other, it will come. The trials will come to an end. Or our lives will come to an end. And then we'll enter into blessings beyond imagination. Or the Lord will come in our time.

And change everything in the twinkling of an eye. So we're to take comfort in that. Christ is coming. His reward is with him. In the meantime, may God cultivate within us these virtues of patience and endurance. That we might be faithful to him and good witnesses. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we do thank you for your goodness. We see it every day in our lives. But you have not guaranteed that the things that we consider good – the pleasant things of life – will continue indefinitely. You will take them away from us. You will do it for a good purpose because that's how you teach us patience.

And you teach us patience and endurance through the instruction of your word. And so we pray that you would teach that to us. And prepare us now for a day of conflict later. And give us wisdom that we might serve you faithfully. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.