

Thursday, February 29, 2024 ▫ Read James 5:7–20

Questions from the Scripture text: How does the beginning of v7 connect it to what comes before? What does the prophet call his readers? What is his command to them? For what are they to be patient? Who is an earthly example of this? For what sort of fruit is he waiting? Upon whose rain-work is he waiting? What are believers to establish in their patience (v8)? What are they waiting for, that is at hand? What should they watch against, since it is near (v9)? What is something that the Lord is doing when He comes? Whom does v10 set forth as an example? Whose judgment was kept on their minds, by speaking in His Name? Whom do we count blessed from their days (v11)? Who, especially, was an example of that? What was his perseverance designed to bring? What does this remind us about the Lord? To what sort of speech does patience not resort (v12)? Into what does the perpetual oath-swearer fall? With what two types of experiences is this waiting-life filled (v13)? What are we to do in each case? What else happens in this life (v14)? Whom are they to call? How do they model godward orientation? With what physical action do they reinforce it? With what are they to pray (v15)? What does this always do? What is sometimes the specific cause for a sickness? What are we to do with our sins (v16)? In order to do what for one another? What does this praying do? Who was like us (v17)? What did he do? With what effect? Then what did he do (v18)? What can happen during this age of waiting (v19)? And what can a brother seek to do at that point? In what two things does this brother participate, if he is successful (v20)?

If we are not living for wealth, how should we live? James 5:7–20 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these fourteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we should live before the face of the Lord, in anticipation of His return and judgment.** 4:13–5:6 had critiqued living for earthly riches—for this world rather than for the Lord. Now the word “therefore” at the beginning of v7 indicates that this is teaching us how properly to live in this world as those who are waiting for the Lord and for the next world. The language of patient, praying waiting for fruit ties the passage together from v7–18. And v19–20 continue that theme.

Waiting for the precious fruit from heaven, v7–8. The prophet compares waiting for the coming of the Lord with the farmer waiting for the “precious” fruit of the earth. He's patient because he has to wait upon the Lord to send the right rains at the right times. We can't bring the Lord's return or accelerate the precious fruit of heaven. Instead, we are instructed to establish (strengthen) our hearts.

Remembering the judgment, v9. Waiting doesn't mean living as if the Lord is not returning, but rather continuously living in light of His return. In particular, it means remembering that we are always before our Judge. And He is returning to judge. All our deeds will be exposed (cf. 2Co 5:10). If we really lived mindfully of this, we wouldn't even grumble against a brother.

Perseverance encouraged by compassion, v10–11. Patience also means enduring suffering (v10). In the midst of it, we may falsely conclude that the sovereign Lord expects us just to grin and bear misery. But this is not the case at all. The prophets spoke in the Name of the Lord. They were keenly aware of His reality and His nearness. Job could not perceive that nearness, but persisted in righteousness anyway, convinced of what he could not see. And he was right. The Lord intended to bring him into doubly rich earthly blessings (cf. Job 42:12–17) and an even greater blessing, richer knowledge of God (cf. Job 42:5). So v11 reminds us that the story of Job's suffering was one of an exceedingly compassionate and merciful Lord. We are enabled to endure by knowing, from His Word, that the Lord is being exceedingly compassionate with us. Do you know that, dear reader, in your own case?

Patience producing steadiness of speech, v12. In God's providence, we have just recently been through Matthew 5:34–37 together, so v12 sounds familiar. But now we gain insight from the local context. The man who lives in light of eternity has a steadiness and steadfastness to him. He is not the sort of unstable fellow who is always taking oaths to try to make his words weighty with men. Rather, he lives in an awareness that he is before the face of God, and his words are measured and forthright accordingly.

Godward orientation and response of the heart, v13–14. Living before the Lord means that our first reflex/recourse in every situation is unto Him. The first response to suffering is prayer. The first response to joy in the heart is to sing psalms. In the case of sickness, the elders of the church are called, since they have been called to a particular ministry of prayer (cf. Ac 6:4). The elders, in turn, anoint the believer—reminding him that he is not his own but has been set apart by God to the particular life and roles assigned to him. The suffering is assigned by the Lord, and if there is a recovery, the health and strength also belong to the Lord.

Praying for what the Word says, v15–16a. The “prayer of faith” is not a prayer of someone who has great strength of believing. Rather, it is prayer that is in submission to the Word and to the Lord of the Word. As those who teach the Word (cf. Eph 4:11), elders are especially appointed to such praying, and believers learn also to pray with this Scripture-informed faith. All who believe in Christ will, indeed, be forgiven, saved, and raised! And if the specific illness was chastening for specific sin, being brought to confession and prayer will have fulfilled the purpose of that illness. In that case, the repenting, praying believer will be healed.

Praying for what God promises, v16b–18. If we did not see this connection of the Word and prayer in the phrase “prayer of faith,” we might be confused (as many have been) by v17. 1Kings records Elijah prophesying that it would not rain, but it does not record his praying. So, many have theorized that James is “relying upon rabbinic tradition” for this. But that is not necessary, for this righteous man must have been expected to add praying to his prophesying. That is certainly what happened in the occasion referenced in v18. The Lord told Elijah what would happen (cf. 1Ki 18:1), and Elijah prayed for it (cf. 1Ki 18:42). It is part of righteous character and conduct that we pray for what the Lord has promised. And it is part of the Lord's great generosity to us that He gives us to participate in His work by this “effective praying.”

Patience with one another and the urgency of perseverance, v19–20. Finally, the fact of the Lord's soon return reminds us that it necessary to continue in the grace of God (cf. Ac 13:43). The one who wanders from the truth and is not restored is exposed as not having made a true beginning in grace. His soul will die, and his sins will be punished. The reality of the Lord's return and judgment presses upon us just how urgent it is that we persevere in the truth!

But just as God appoints prayer as a means by which He works, so also He appoints the fellowship of believers as a means by which He works. A genuine believer who wanders from the truth will be turned back. His soul will be saved from death, and the multitude of his sins will be covered. And it is a great privilege to be used to turn a brother from the error of his way.

Why is it so easy for you to be forgetful of the sure return of the Lord and the judgment to come? By what means has He appointed to keep you mindful of Him? In which of the areas touched upon in this passage, are you most forgetful? How will you employ His means to address this?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for not living as those who eagerly await Your appearing. Grant that we would endure patiently. Forgive us for how we have grumbled against our brothers before Your face. Forgive us for being forgetful of Your compassion and mercy, so that our hearts have been slow to pray in suffering and slow to sing psalms in cheerfulness. Forgive us also for not availing ourselves of the ministry of the elders and of the body. Grant unto us to grow in all of these areas, and keep us in the way of truth. Thus, save our souls from death, we pray, and cover the multitude of our sins, we ask, through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP112 “O Praise the Lord” or TPH538 “Take My Life, and Let It Be”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

James chapter 5 verses 7 through 20, these are God's words. Therefore be patient Brethren until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth waiting patiently for it. Until it receives the early, and lot of rain. You'll also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is, and Do not Grumble against one another Brethren.

Unless you be condemned. Behold the judge is standing at the door. My Brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them. Blessed to endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job. And seeing the end intended by the Lord that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. But if I'm above all my brethren, do not swear.

Either by Heaven or by Earth or with any other Earth? Look like your yes BS and your no, no. Last you fall into judgment. There's anyone among you suffering, let him pray. Does anyone cheer up when I'm saying Psalms? There's anyone among you sick, let him call for the Elders of the church.

And let them pray over him. Anointing him with oil. In the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick. And the Lord will raise them up and if he has committed sins, he'll be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another. And pray for one another that you may be healed.

The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man, avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain. And it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and The heaven gave rain and the Earth produced its fruit.

Brethren. If anyone among you wanders from the truth. When someone turns him back, Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the air of his way. Will save a soul from Death. And cover a multitude. Ever since. So, for the reading of Gods inspired and And Aaron toward,

In the previous two passages. The prophet Lord's brother. Had been addressing us on. The topic of money, the theme of money. And how foolish it is to. live. That. Is about to be. Destroyed. In a world that Cannot and will not last. But now, He is teaching us.

How to live for the world that will last forever. Even though we do not yet see it.

And the answer to that is, Be patient. Verse 7. Therefore Be patient. Brethren. And he gives the example of the farmer. God has Forced the farmer to learn patience. Because he can't make the rain come. And even if he did, it would have to be at the right times.

There's a proper time for the early rain, and there's proper time for the latter rain. germinating the seed. so forth. and so he has to wait upon the Lord. And he says you also be patient. Establish your hearts. And he uses this idea of Being patient and entrusting our heart establishing our hearts, strengthening our heart in the Lord.

And it really runs through the entire section, through Verse 18, where he's using Elijah as an example. Of someone who prayed. no rain. Then for rain, And Heaven gave the rain. And the Earth produced its fruit. And so, how are we to live patiently? How are we to live as those whose hearts are strengthened in the Lord?

And not bound up in this world. What does that look like? Well, one of the primary places that it shows itself in our life, And this is not surprising considering the themes from earlier in the book. Is in our speech. If we are patient from for if we're a patient for the Lord, if we are trusting him, Then we do not Grumble.

Against our brother. After all, he is our brother and the Lord who is saving us. And saving him. And so we have a special care for and care about how we interact with those who profess Faith, those who are members of the visible church. because Jesus is right at the door.

and if you knew he could overhear you on the other side of the door. And then you wouldn't Grumble against your brother. But of course he does hear you. And, And he, At hand, the coming of the Lord. Is at hand. Um,

And so, We ought to be patient like the prophet prophets. We're patient guarding their mouths. Speaking, only in the name of the Lord. Not like the false prophets who their impulses control their tongues. But like the true prophets who let the Lord. Control their tongues. Even though that sometimes meant, they had to suffer more greatly.

Because they only spoke that way. And Job you remember. He sat in silence for a week. And he was patient and persevering. And we learn, we discover in that book, that God is compassionate to him the whole time. We see that God is growing him in the knowledge of Of himself and that even the Earthly things that he had lost would be doubly paid to him.

Now in the end and of course, even his believing children whom he had lost or not ultimately lost because they too will live forever and now how great Will be the Those who are in his household, the number of those who were in his household and so forth.

And so you see the tenderness? Of the Lord. Both in. The end to which she is bringing us and tenderness towards us even in the midst. Of our suffering. So we be patient with our tongues, we be patient and not Grumble. we be patient and speak only in the name of the Lord.

Will you be patient and be a steady person? Who is not Always making. grandiose statements. Like swearing by Heaven or swearing by Earth, or swearing by whatever it is verse 12 says any other oath No, just a steady person. Speaks the right thing. Yes. Yes, no, no. It does not fill his ordinary conversation.

with drama. He saves. O's and vowels for those proper occasions. that the scripture teaches us for making them and taking them. And if we are living, then in the light of That changes how we respond to the varying conditions on Earth. Now, our experience of Providence is much more up and down, are very much up and down.

Now, by comparison. To what it shall be. And so there are going to be times when we are suffering. But if we are responding to our suffering, In light of. The rule of the Lord Jesus and the soon return of the Lord Jesus than if you're suffering, you respond to that by praying.

And if you're cheerful, if you're joyful, You respond to that, by singing a song. And if you're sick, You want to make as good spiritual use of your sickness as you can? And so you call for the Elders of the church. What are they to do? what are they there to do?

Is it some sort of mystical, healing ceremony? No, they are Shepherd, teachers. And the sicknesses and Providence from God, that you want to make, right use of spiritually. And so you call them and they remind you of God's goodness. They remind you that Jesus took upon himself. Our diseases and our iniquities.

You remind them that Jesus has anointed them as those who belong specifically to him. By his Sovereign Choice by his Sovereign work, and you even use oil, Or the Elder does the Elder even uses oil to remind the believer that he has been set apart by God in Christ as much as the prophets and Priests and kings of old had been set apart by God.

How much more set apart? Can you get being united to Christ through faith? And so we make right spiritual use. Of every circumstance. This godward orientation of the heart. That's how you live in this world. Knowing that this is not the, the Eternal world, the Everlasting. You live with this godward orientation, you respond to your suffering by prayer to God.

You respond to cheerfulness. By. Singing to God, you responds to unusual Providence by getting the shepherding that you need. And particularly in a sickness, which

may be. A form of chastening. There are a number of Corinthians who ought to have called for the Elders of the church. Many of them were very ill and some of them had died, fallen asleep in the Lord.

Why while they were taking the Lord's supper in the wrong way? And the Lord was chastening them. And it would have been. Unappropriate Ministry of their Elders. If they were not probably possibly part of the problem and needing the Apostle to come and write to the modern, correct them, but it would have an appropriate Ministry of their Elders.

To come and talk to them and lead them in prayer and ask, for God to bring about his own, good purposes in the sickness and talk to the parishioner. The church member about what sin he might be. Might have opportunity to be repenting of, and if he repents from it, lo and behold the usefulness of the Providence that God said has been accomplished and he takes away the illness when the repentance has come.

And so, the one another in verse 16 is especially with the elders, that's the context there. but not only Elders can be confessed to. Or had to pray for you. Although praise God in a situation where it's difficult, sometimes to know who's appropriate to tell what to he's built into Church family life men who it ought to be appropriate to if they have been Recognized and called, according to the character that God has defined in first Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

And also, then in your family. it's always appropriate to get the help of mom to get the help of Dad. And so this godward orientation of remembering that if when the Lord was going to bring drought and bring grain, he had Elijah pray. And we actually don't have Elijah praying for it not to rain.

in First Kings 17. Where that event takes place. It doesn't tell us that he did. It's implied. some commentators many commentators, say the, the prophet must be Relying on rabbinic tradition for this or He was carried Along by the Holy. And he recognized that men of God.

Pray for what the word of God prophesies her for what the word of God promises, that's the prayer of Right, when it says the the prayer of faith will save the second verse 15. It's not telling someone. Secret magic prayer. He's like, no, you pray for what God's word says, that's what faith does.

It believes what God's word says. And so of course if God's word promises salvation in Christ and you pray by faith in Christ to save. Christ will save. And they're not just talking about healing from whatever that that temporary illness was. He's talking about perfection, Perfection of the soul and resurrection of the body and life Everlasting conformed to Jesus body and soul glorious forever.

And so if if Elijah Prayed for a drought because God said there was going to be a drought How much more should we pray for that? To be conformed to Christ to Have our sanctification completed, the cleansing of our sins accomplished to have To be brought safely to the last day.

Where we'll be resurrected gloriously. Praise God. And if that is what we are living for and we have a brother Who has lost sight of that. If anyone among you wanders from the truth. Are we not out of love for our brother? Want to be used by God to bring him back.

To living by that faith in Christ. To having that godward orientation. To repent, turn away from his sins. Come back again. And what a blessing then it is to be used of God and one another's lives. As he continues to complete the work that he's begun. So someone turns him back, let him know that.

He who turns a sinner from the era of his way, will save a soul from death. And cover a multitude of sins.

Think about the Things that men get to do in this world. And we all are busy and have things to get done, but if you get the opportunity to save us, whole from death and cover a multitude of sins, I think that's a pretty good days. work. That the Lord in his Providence, will have given you.

And so, There's this competing. Of. In verses 7 through 20 to what we had seen going back. from 413. To five verse 6. Which is this God word Eternal view of life. It doesn't ignore this life. That just interacts with this life and this world. Mindfully of the Lord in fellowship with him in remembrance of him.

And may the Lord give us so to live. So long as we are on the earth. Let's pray. We thank you, Father for This wonderful, practical helpful. A book in your Holy Bible. And we ask that your spirit would write its truth in our hearts. We are amazed Lord at how easily, we Become forgetful of what we have read and thought about When we were worshiping you.

But we desire to live this way, always with heart and mind responding to you. And so, we pray that your spirit. Would renew our minds. And conform. to the image of Christ that we may be. Not conform to the pattern of this world. But maybe transformed. Granted, we ask him Jesus name. Amen.