

# Longsuffering Unto the Coming of the Lord

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**Bible Text:** James 5:7-11  
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James chapter 5 is the scripture reading for this evening and the text for the preaching is James 5 verses 7 through 11, the first part of verse 11. Lord willing, next time we will look at that second part of verse 11 and the example of Job. But the text is verses 7 through 11a, but we read the chapter first in its entirety. James chapter 5.

1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered [corroded]; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire [the wages] of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman [the farmer] waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. 12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. 13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? 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: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a

righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text is verses 7 through 11a. Let me read that again.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure.

Just a note there, verse 10 will really be treated more in our next sermon, Lord willing, when we look at the second half of verse 11. So there's going to be light treatment of verse 10 in the preaching this evening.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, one thing that we've noted as we've been working through the letter of James is that James is very, very practical and James is very, very pastoral. Everything that James writes, he writes to help and encourage the saints in their personal walk with the Lord and in the challenges they are facing. That becomes very clear also in this section of the letter as we start coming to the end of the book. And it's also very clear, even when you just compare what we looked at last week with what we're going to look at tonight. Last week, remember, we looked at verses 1 through 6, and we saw James giving a very powerful warning against the rich unbelievers who were oppressing and exploiting the poor and who were living in wantonness. He tells them in no uncertain terms that God sees what they're doing and that they are headed for extreme misery. Those who oppress the poor will not get away with their crimes.

But now in these verses that immediately follow, as James once again speaks more directly to the saints in the churches to which he's writing, he immediately changes his tone. Instead of speaking that harsh word of judgment, James speaks a word of comfort and a word of encouragement and he exhorts these saints to patience. And these words are pastoral on a number of levels. First, after writing such a scathing rebuke against the oppressors, what James does not want now is for the saints who are reading this and hearing this to rise up in some kind of revolt or rebellion against these rich oppressors. That was not the point of verses 1 through 6. No, God will repay. Vengeance belongs to

him. That's the point. And so the saints are being called now to be patient, to quietly wait on the Lord for that day of judgment.

Second, James wants these saints to be encouraged in their own hope, to remember that they do have a bright future awaiting them. Though their life here below is full of trial and poverty, and there's not much to their earthly life, nevertheless, there is a bright future in store for them at Christ's second coming, where they will be delivered from all their sufferings and then yes, when the wicked also will be given the judgment they deserve. And then as we'll see tonight, James also has a deep concern that the suffering that these saints are going through at the hands of their oppressors does not cause them to start hurting each other and taking out their sufferings and their hurt on each other and start attacking the fellowship that they have with one another. James touches on that too.

And this passage is very fitting for an applicatory sermon tonight because we really stand in need of the same word tonight as we come away from the Lord's Supper. I think the feeling that we might have when we're at the Lord's Supper and as we leave the Lord's Supper is this: I just want to stay here. I just want to stay in church. I just want to continually dwell on God's word, to hear this word of forgiveness, to hear this word that God loves me and I don't want to have to deal with the realities of tomorrow and the work week and the responsibilities of life. And so now the calling that comes to us this evening is this, be patient. As you get up from the Lord's Supper, as you go to your homes, as you get back, you might say, to living that pilgrim life on the earth, be patient. Don't resort now to sinful behavior. Don't go back to any sinful behavior. Continue to live in hope. Continue to live in the hope of Christ's second coming. Keep looking ahead to that glory that awaits. And especially this, keep endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Take care of the communion that you enjoy around the Lord's Supper table. Don't grudge one against another, brethren, but commit yourself unto the Lord and keep exercising that love for each other. That's really the word we need as we come away from the Lord's Supper. That's really the word contained in the text this evening. We take as our theme this evening, "Longsuffering Unto the Coming of the Lord," and we look at that theme under three points. First, we look at the admonitions that James gives. Second, we look at the reasons for these admonitions and why we should heed them. And then third, the blessings. That's verse 11a, "Behold, we count them happy which endure."

Well, there's a few admonitions that James gives in the text, and we'll take them in turn, but the first and the main admonition is that admonition to be patient. As James writes in verse 7, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." Now the question is, what is patience? Well, it's interesting because in the Greek, in the original, there's actually two words for patience and they have a slight different meaning from each other, and both are used in this section. The one word for patience is the word that means to endure. It means to endure under an affliction. So let's say a person is undergoing a great trial, he's got a great burden of a trial upon him, and he's bearing up under that burden patiently and he's not losing heart or courage. He's not overcome by the trials or crushed by them, but he endures. That's actually the word that James uses in verse 11 when he

starts talking about the patience of Job. Job had great patience. We'll look at Job more next time, Lord willing, but that's what Job had, that endurance under the trial.

The second word for patience is the word that means to be longsuffering, to suffer long, and that word has the idea that a person has the power to avenge himself. He has within him the means to change his circumstances but for one reason or another, he chooses to suffer under the circumstances. So the idea here with this word is this, you're choosing to restrain yourself so that instead of getting angry or retaliating against someone, you instead bear patiently with them. You're not short-tempered, you're long-tempered. That's the word that James uses in verse 7 and in verse 8 and that's also why I use the word longsuffering in the theme for the sermon, so that we have that clear. If we can make any difference here between these words, which we can, that's the word, longsuffering until the day of the Lord.

So, what is longsuffering? Well, let's be aware that God himself is longsuffering. This is exactly the word that's used in 2 Peter 3, verse 9, where we read of God being longsuffering. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward." God himself is longsuffering and what that means is that, although you might say God has the power to snatch up his people out of this earth at any moment and deliver them from their afflictions and their sufferings, nevertheless, God is patient. He could immediately destroy all his and our enemies. He could deliver his people at any time from our miseries. But he also knows what is needed for our salvation. He knows that suffering is necessary for us and our salvation and for the gathering of the church. To continue quoting from 2 Peter 3 verse 9, "God is not willing that any of his people should perish." Right? If Jesus would come now, well, what about the elect that have been ordained to eternal life who haven't yet even been born? No, so God is patient. He's "longsuffering, not willing that any of his people should perish, but that all his people should come to repentance and be gathered into the church."

And so, right now, even Jesus sitting on the throne is longsuffering. He's enduring the sufferings that his people are going through at the hands of the wicked, and he himself is afflicted in all their afflictions. He feels their pain, and yet, nevertheless, he doesn't suddenly rise up and change their circumstances or destroy all their enemies, but he deals patiently with their sufferings. And that's exactly what James is telling the saints to do here in the midst of their circumstances. Be patient, therefore, brethren. The idea, then, is this: don't take up arms against these rich oppressors. Don't retaliate when they're perpetrating sins against you. Don't fall into the temptation of using sinful means, your own means, to get out from underneath your sufferings. But continue to do good. Continue to do what God is calling you to do. Love your enemies. Do good to them that despitefully use you and where you are called to suffer in that suffering, be patient. Be longsuffering.

That's the idea here of being patient but now the question is, how are they supposed to do that? How can people be patient when they are being cruelly oppressed and exploited by rich oppressors? How can they be patient when they are not getting their wages and they can't even buy food for the day and they're starving to death? Well, James writes, "Be

patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." And so the idea is this: keep looking ahead, keep looking ahead to that great and terrible day of the Lord, keep looking ahead to that day with hope and be patient knowing that the Lord is coming again and he will deliver you and he will make all things right. Your suffering will not be forever. It will end and it will certainly end when the Lord comes again on the clouds of glory.

So that's how they are to be patient. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord. That means be patient until the coming of the Lord, but it also then means this, be patient with a view to his coming. Always looking to the coming of the Lord. Why? Because when Christ comes again on the clouds of heaven, he will deliver his people from all their afflictions and he will also publicly vindicate their righteous cause. He will publicly condemn their oppressors, and he will show these cruel men the terrible sins they committed in oppressing, in causing suffering to his people. He will publicly testify that his poor, oppressed people will forever be made blessed, while the ones who oppress them will be punished. Be patient. Be longsuffering, because there is a day coming when God will make right all the wrongs you endured. Don't take matters into your own hands. Be patient.

That's the first admonition. Then for the second admonition, I would move to the second half of verse 7 and the very beginning of verse 8. Notice what we read there. Second half of verse 7, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he received the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient." And I think the real value of the example that James gives here is this: look, there's a purpose with your patience. You're not just being patient, but there is a purpose with it. You have to be patient. That's just how it is, but there's a purpose with it. Just like with the farmer, who just has to wait, but there's also a purpose with it. So James says, think of the husbandman, think of the farmer or the gardener. Right? He tills his ground, he preps the field, and he sows his seed and then what does he do? He has to wait. He waits for the early rains, the spring rains, we would call them, and then he also waits for the latter rains, the autumn rains. He waits for these rains because these rains are what is necessary to bring the crop to maturity so that it's ready for the harvest. And the point is this, you can't, as a farmer, harvest your crop before it's ripe. If you try to go into the field before the crop is ripe and you don't wait, you're not even going to have a crop. You're just going to waste your field. And so the husbandman, the farmer, has to be longsuffering.

Someone might say, "Well, what about, what about if my crop gets drought?" I can imagine a farmer, right? He's got 30 days or 20 days or 10 days till he knows that the crop is going to be ripe and yet, as he's waiting for the crop to harvest and to be ripened in God's perfect timing, he's got all these fears and these thoughts in his mind. "What if drought strikes? What if this drought continues for these next 30 days? What if a pestilence comes? Or locusts come and destroy my crop? What if frost comes early? Maybe I should just harvest my crop now!" No! You have to wait or the crops you will be harvesting won't even be ripe. And part of the point now is this, that's how it is with God's people and the sufferings we have to go through, right? We might say, "Why does God allow my enemies to oppress me? Why does God wait to destroy my enemies? Why is God putting up with this? My enemies and his enemies, why is God putting up with

this?" And the answer is because God knows, he's the perfect husbandman, he's the perfect farmer who knows that this is what is needed to bring you, as part of the harvest, to maturity. God knows he needs to be patient. He needs to be longsuffering. He has to wait until it is time to bring the full harvest home.

And that's a very comforting thought, beloved, because it reminds us that God knows what he's doing with our sufferings. His eye is on the sparrow, we know that, and you can be sure his eye is on his harvest. He's got his eye on his church, and his eye is on every stalk of grain, and his eye is on you in the midst of the oppressions and the afflictions that you go through and he's got a purpose with it, a purpose to bring you to maturity. That's his purpose for you and he's got a purpose for the wicked also. That's verse 7. And then right away at the beginning of verse 8, James writes, "Be ye also patient." Just as God exercises longsuffering, just as the farmer practices this, so you too, be patient. That's the second admonition.

Then right after that second admonition, he gives a third admonition, "establish your hearts," verse 8, and what that means is simply this, strengthen your hearts or make firm your hearts. And what that simply means is this, have courage, have faith. Fix your heart on the Lord. Fix your heart on the Lord's promises. Fix your heart on Jesus Christ. Fix your heart on his cross. Fix your heart on the gospel that we heard and looked at this morning of the forgiveness of sins. Fix your heart on the thoughts of God's lovingkindness and mercy and faithfulness towards you. Keep before your mind this reality that if God loved you while you were still a sinner, much more, he loves you now as his adopted child brought into his family. Keep before your mind the reality God is working this for your good, that God is in control. He is a righteous judge. He knows all and sees all. Keep your mind focused on the reality that he is also coming to make things right.

And then keep your mind focused on what God is calling you to do here and now. Right? That's the goal of the child of God. Your goal is to be faithful. My goal is to honor God, even if it is in this way of suffering and pain that he has ordained for me. My goal is obedience. My goal is keeping God's law out of love and honor for God, knowing the salvation that he has made me a recipient of through his Son, Jesus Christ. Don't waver from that goal. Establish your hearts. And the point is this, if your heart is established, if your inmost being is established, that's going to guide you in your thoughts, that's going to guide you in your desires and ambitions, that's going to guide you in your actions and how you live your life.

And that's very practical, beloved. How do I keep from attacking my oppressor? How do I keep from falling into a pit of despair or hopelessness maybe when I can't? How do I keep from cursing my neighbor under my breath or taking revenge? I remember God's promises. I remember his love for me in Jesus Christ. I remember the gospel. I remember the Lord's Supper. I remember my Savior is coming again. And I remember that it is his to direct the affairs of my life, it is his to do that and it is mine to humble myself in the sight of the Lord and do his will. That's the wisdom that is from above. That is the faith that is a living faith.

That's the third admonition, establish your heart, and then the fourth admonition is found in verse 9, walking through the text., "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned." Grudge not one against another, and this admonition we might say is the negative, right? Be patient, that's positive. Be patient, that's positive, establish your hearts. And now this, the negative, don't do this. Don't grudge one against another.

And the word grudge is kind of a challenging word to translate. It could mean murmur. It could mean complain. Don't complain about each other. Don't murmur about each other. It could mean simply to sigh. Don't sigh against each other. And part of the idea then is this, in the midst of your sufferings right now that you're going through, you're going to be tempted to take out your frustrations on others, others in the church, maybe my closest neighbors even in my own home and family. The idea is this, in the midst of your sufferings, maybe you'll be tempted to become envious of others in the church, maybe others who are not oppressed or experiencing the affliction right now that you are experiencing. In the midst of your sufferings, maybe the temptation is to become bitter or maybe it is to just start complaining about all the weaknesses and the failings that you see in all the other members of the church, right? When I'm going through suffering, it's easy for me to start becoming judgmental of my brothers and sisters and being critical of all their weaknesses because that's my sinful nature and because I'm also getting worn down through the sufferings. And James says, don't do that, beloved lest ye be condemned, lest ye be judged.

No, what's the law that we're supposed to live by? Love your neighbor as yourself. And how important that is in the church when you're going through difficult times. Don't go in this direction of judging one another and condemning one another. Don't do that. You're going to be tempted to do that. You're probably going to find your own justification for doing that. Go in the direction of love in taking special care for each other and doing each other good. And then James writes after that, look at the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and that's maybe the fifth admonition. That is an admonition. We're going to look at this more next time, as I already said, as we look at the example of Job. But not only next time, but even later on in the chapter, he mentions Elijah, a prophet who certainly went through experiencing affliction, and how he dealt with that during the days of wicked King Ahab and Jezebel.

That's the admonition James gives, "Be patient unto the coming of the Lord." Now before we move on, I want us to appreciate that these words are not just for the suffering church in the early New Testament time period that James is interacting with. These words are also for the church of all ages and for us too. And one thing that probably needs emphasis for us today is the need to keep Christ's second coming in our minds. We live in a relatively unique time, beloved. The church in the West is, generally speaking, very prosperous. We live very comfortably. Yes, we know there's still the stresses and responsibilities of life, but as Christians, we're not being treated by the world the same way these saints were being treated. We get paid regularly. Some of us have our own businesses. The world still allows us to have our own vacation days, to have our own cottages on the lake, to have our own schools, to have our own recreation. And in these

circumstances of comfort, it's easy for us to have our guard down, and it's easy for us to stop looking for Christ's second coming with eagerness. And the calling James gives in the text may even seem to some to be rather nonsensical, because life is pretty good for me right now. Why should I look ahead to something future when I'm pretty comfortable here? And yet, I think we all understand even now we should be careful to exercise patience and longsuffering, because partly is we know that the time will come when our circumstances will not be so comfortable, when the temptation will be great to shake the fist at those over us and rebel or revolt. And I suppose the point also is this, even regardless of what our circumstances is from an earthly point of view, we should still be feeling the weight of this calling to be longsuffering. And I think the point is this, I really shouldn't even be so satisfied with how things really are here below, should I? I know the sin that surrounds me on every side and in my own sinful nature. I grieve over the sufferings and injustices found in this world. As a Christian who has the hope of glory, the hope, that hope should naturally invoke within me a sense of longsuffering, being patient, patiently putting up with what we're experiencing here below, always wanting to be satisfied with those things that are ahead of us. And especially when I have that opportunity to use my arm of flesh to get my way, then that calling perhaps especially comes, be longsuffering, don't go in that direction. I might have the means, but I'm called to be faithful to the Lord.

And I think what's important for us to recognize is this, it starts right here. It starts right here in church, starts right here in our own homes, our own marriages. It starts with not grudging one against another. It starts with not complaining or murmuring about each other, but practicing that fruit of the Spirit, because this is the word used for the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, exercising that longsuffering towards each other. It starts with exercising true brotherly love towards my brother and sister here in church, because the reality is, if I can't do it here, and if I can't do it now, how will I be able to do it when I find myself in harder circumstances in the midst of the world?

So this is a word for all of us, and it's a word to take very seriously and soberly. This is very pastoral. James loves these saints, and he has a concern for them. That leads us to the second point of the sermon, why? Why should I be longsuffering unto the coming of the Lord? Why should I be patient? Well, again, James gives a few reasons here too, and the first reason he gives is this, because the day of the Lord is near. Verse 8, "Be ye also patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." That's the reason and the point is, it's just a little while, beloved, it's just a little while until the Lord returns. You can be patient. You can exercise this lovingkindness and do what's right, because the day when God will make all things right is close at hand.

Now we might say, "But it's so hard to be patient and it seems like it's going to be forever until Jesus comes again. I want him to come now!" But James says, his coming is near at hand. Actually in verse 9, James goes on to say, "Behold, the judge standeth before the door." And the idea there is this, think of a courtroom. I don't know if the children have been in a courtroom, but think of a courtroom where you have a door in the back and everyone is in the courtroom, right, in the benches, and then you have the two seats, and then the judge's chair. And there's a door in the back, and the judge is right there on the



other side of the door and all he has to do is turn the doorknob and push the door open, and he's there. And then what will happen when he walks in? Well, everyone who's sitting in the bench, everyone who's talking, will suddenly have to stop what they're doing, stand up, and honor the judge. And that's how it is with Jesus. Jesus is the judge standing at the door. He's right there. He's got his hand on the doorknob. All he has to do is turn the doorknob, push the door open, and he'll be there, there to carry out judgment.

So be patient. Keep humbling yourself in the sight of the Lord. Keep practicing true religion. Keep visiting the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. Keep doing what's right. Keep yourself unspotted from the world. Keep doing what's right in the midst of your sufferings because the judge is right there. The day of the Lord is near and certainly, beloved, if that was true for the saints in James' time, 2,000 years ago, how much truer isn't that the case for us today? You might say, the doorknob's already been turned. It's just a matter of pushing the door open, and the judge is there.

So that's the first reason we should be patient, the day of the Lord is near. Second, the reason is this, this is really implied, but it's really based on where we were last week. The reason is this, when the judge comes, he's going to judge righteously. He will judge in defense of his people. That's especially true in light of, that's captured in the verses leading up to the text, verses 1 through 6, right? James sees the wicked and what they do. James knows the plight of his people, I mean to say Jesus. Jesus sees the wicked and what they do. Jesus knows the plight of his people. Jesus is hearing the cries of the laborers who cry out to him for help, and he's standing at the door. He hears them. And when he walks through those doors, it's like this oppression and this exploitation is taking place right in the courtroom and all the judge has to do is push the door open, and he will be there. And when he walks through those doors, the point is, he will judge with perfect awareness of what the truth is, and he will judge according to that truth, without being a respecter of persons, and he will make everything right.

That's good encouragement for God's people, who know that if they act faithfully according to God's word, they might never see justice here on this earth in this short, fleeting, earthly life, but they know there is a day when justice will be given. We sang about that. That's part of the hope of the child of God. And of course, when we remember who the judge is, and when we remember what we celebrated this morning, then we have good reason to be patient because remember, the one who's coming to judge is the very same person who offered himself before the tribunal of God for our sakes, and who suffered and died and rose again for us. The one who is coming to judge is the same one who stood up from his throne as he saw Stephen being stoned to death and had a great care for Stephen. And the one who's coming to judge is the one who views his church as his precious, beloved bride who is jealous over her. He's jealous over her. Certainly, if I know Jesus' amazing love for me, such amazing love that he's already laid down his life for me, then I can be patient until his second coming because I know he's going to come with that same love to take me as his own and make things right.

That's the second reason, he's going to judge righteously, and the third reason is this, I already touched upon it earlier, the third reason is this, there's going to be a good fruit as

a result of exercising patience. That's the reason for being patient until the day of the Lord, the coming of the Lord. The husbandman, the farmer, is waiting for the early and latter rains. He can't harvest his crops any earlier, lest he ruin his crops. He needs to wait until the crop matures. And just so, we need to wait, knowing that the struggles and the sufferings we go through are part of God's ripening process. We experience life passing through our fingers like sand. We experience the loss of earthly life. And it is a sense of loss and that's working for us to bring us to maturity and to bring his church to her full beauty and glory.

Well, not only do we have reason to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord, but we also know there's great blessing in store for those who do and this is where we look at the beginning of verse 11, "Behold, we count them happy which endure." Right? You count those happy who have endured. We're happy in the moment because we know we're honoring the Lord. We have joy. And we know that those others who have endured are happy. It's like the farmer. If the farmer waits patiently for the early and latter rains, and he is patient, and he waits till his crop is ready for harvest, then when the time comes, that long-anticipated time to harvest the crops, he's harvesting them in happiness. He sows in tears, and he reaps in joy. And just so the child of God, who's waiting patiently on the Lord, he won't be left disappointed either when he sees the reward that is in store for him.

This was the case for the Old Testament saints as well. Think of Elijah. You can be sure he is happy in heaven. We count him happy. Enoch, who was persecuted, who was taken by the Lord, the understanding is, because the wicked hated him so much, they were pursuing him to kill him. We count him happy too. The saints who died in the Lord, who've gone before us, they see the Lord in glory. They know the joy of glory and we too will know that joy as well. It's the joy of receiving the crown of life. It's the joy of seeing our Lord and Savior face to face and never being separated from his presence. It's the joy that we have of knowing and then one day seeing him be honored as he executes justice. It's the joy of seeing how God was perfectly faithful and all the promises that he gave us were even much more deeper and more glorious than we even imagined here on the earth. It's the joy of being delivered from the body of this death. And it's the joy of enjoying perfect communion at the table of the Lord forever, not having to get up and go and experience a pilgrimage again, but we get to sit and we get to stay in the heavenly sanctuary with our Lord for days without end. Already now, beloved, we count them happy which endure. As I said, our loved ones who died in the Lord, who maybe some of them endured great sufferings and endured, we count them happy. Having endured, we count them happy. They are with Jesus and just so it will be with us, and with all those who wait patiently unto the coming of the Lord.

Well, one final question is this, right, we're going from the Lord's Supper this morning. This is the calling that comes to us. We've looked at it, and now the question we're left with is this: how? How do we wait patiently? How can we do this what James is telling us to do? Well, we know, beloved, it's not of ourselves. So let me mention two things. First, remember, we've just come from the Lord's Supper and what the Lord's Supper communicates to us is that all of it is of God's grace so that even now this calling given to

us in grace, the Lord is going to give us the grace to strengthen us for the calling. We also remember that the Lord Jesus, who suffered and died for us, he also himself was longsuffering. He endured through the agonies of hell and the shame that sinful men heaped upon him and it's by his power given to us through faith that we also, Christ in us and through us, we also can be longsuffering in these sufferings and trials that God gives us.

So we rely on Jesus and second, let me point out that James himself is going to give an answer to this question in the verses that follow. We'll get to that in a few sermons. Look at Elijah, he says. He's one of the prophets whom we count happy, who endured, and look at him. You might say, I'm so weak. This calling, this suffering is hard. Elijah was a man of like passions as you and me. He was no different than us. He was a man just like you and me. How did he do it? He did it by grace, we already said that, and he did it by prayer. So another encouragement to pray. That's really where this chapter is going, that strong encouragement to pray, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." You need wisdom. Remember what he said right at the beginning of the letter, chapter 1, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Let him pray."

May God give us his blessing as he gives us this calling. May God give us the grace of longsuffering. May God give us that strong focus on Christ's second coming. May God give us hearts filled with iron so that our hearts are established. And may God give us a deep love for the communion of the saints. And may he keep us in our ways then until we too, with the saints who have gone before us, who also endured, until we too enjoy the full happiness of the glory that awaits. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we thank thee that this is not just a pastoral word from James to certain people, but this is thy pastoral loving word to us, thy church also today. We pray that thou wilt give us the grace to heed this admonition, these admonitions. Give us, as we've already prayed, give us to be more heavenly-minded, and give us to be careful in the communion of the saints, and give us to know that thy grace is sufficient, and give us to be those who are given to prayer. We thank thee for those who've gone before us, who we know are happy, the cloud of witnesses. And we pray, Father, that by thy grace thou wilt lead us in those same paths. Bless this preaching to our hearts and to our lives. Bless us in this week. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*