

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 05: 10-12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week we'll be reading James chapter 5, and today we'll read from verse 10 to verse 12.

Yesterday, we read that James encourages the saints in suffering to patiently endure until the Lord's coming. Those who endure to the end will receive the crown of life. The three conditions for successful endurance are to endure with hope, endure with faith, and endure with love. James himself lived and grew up with Jesus in Nazareth, deeply understood that testimonies provide more direct and effective help to people. He uses the heroes of faith from the Old Testament as examples to encourage the saints to persevere with patience.

Verse 10: "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience."

From the beginning, James addresses them, my brothers, speaking as a church elder and affectionately calling the saints in the church "brothers." This emphasizes that through Jesus Christ, we have all received life from God and become children of the Heavenly Father, making us brothers and sisters to each other. The church, like a family, has no clerical hierarchy; we all learn to serve God and the church together.

Next, James uses the prophets of the Old Testament as examples of those who suffered and endured. The prophets spoke for the Lord, often delivering words of warning, rebuke, exhortation, and encouragement to God's people in their times. They were opposed by those in power and often unpopular with the people, leading them into frequent hardships. Nevertheless, they faithfully held to God's commission, speaking for Him with dedication. They serve as excellent examples of endurance in the face of suffering.

Although James did not mention names, almost every author of the Old Testament prophetic books, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others, serves as an example of suffering and endurance. Hebrews chapter 11 is the Hall of Fame of faith; in verse 27, it mentions that Moses endured and persevered, enabling him to lead two million Israelites out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

Hebrews 11:35-38 directly points out the sufferings endured by the Old Testament prophets: "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still, others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." These prophets, who suffered and endured hardships in times of trouble, were people of whom the world was not worthy. They belonged to God and to heaven, living a heavenly life on earth. Indeed, the world was not worthy of them.

Then Hebrews 11:39-40 gives a conclusion about these great heroes of faith: "And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us." They all believed in God's promises, but did not receive them on earth, because God had prepared something better.

This better thing is that Jesus Christ Himself would come to earth to complete redemption. Therefore, the prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to the better thing promised by God. As New Testament believers, we look back, because Jesus Christ has already come and accomplished redemption. They did not receive the promises, yet they lived their lives with patience in faith. We have received the promises, and we should look to their example, enduring patiently and waiting for Christ's return. If Christ delays, we must also endure patiently throughout our lives, just as they did. When Christ returns, we and they will receive glory together, and that will be complete glory.

Verse 11: “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

The ones who endured should refer to the prophets mentioned in the previous verse. They lived a life of suffering and patience, misunderstood and unaccepted in their generations. They disregarded worldly comforts and pleasures, choosing a path of suffering and patience. The New Testament believers witnessed Jesus Christ's incarnation and the completion of redemption, just as these Old Testament prophets had predicted. Seeing God's promises fulfilled, we should call them blessed. Furthermore, we should learn from their example and practice patience in all kinds of trials.

James then presents the example of Job. Job is the quintessential figure of innocent suffering in the Old Testament. Job 1:1 describes him as blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil. Because he was a righteous man, God blessed him abundantly: he had ten children and great wealth, as recorded in Job 1:2-3.

Later, Satan challenged God, claiming that Job's fear of God was due to God's blessings and protection. If God removed these blessings, Job would surely curse Him. God allowed Satan to attack Job, sparing only his life, to test if Job would still fear God. We then see that this righteous man, Job, lost all his children and wealth in a short period of time, and his body was covered with painful sores. Even his wife despised him. Yet, Job maintained his piety and continued to fear God.

The conclusion God gave to Job is recorded in Job 42:12-14. God gave him ten more children, and his wealth was twice what he had before. Job bore a beautiful testimony before Satan, proving that his fear of God was not dependent on God's blessings and protection. Even when he lost everything, he still feared God. God is full of compassion and mercy. After Job overcame Satan's temptations, God blessed him doubly.

This explanation is based on the translation of the Chinese Union Version, which says, "know the end given to Job by the Lord." This explanation is indeed beautiful and encouraging, but there is a slight issue. The Chinese Union Version translates it

as "know the end given to him by the Lord," whereas the KJV translates it as "having seen the end of the Lord." This follows the original text, which means "know the end of the Lord" rather than "the end of Job given by the Lord." If we approach it from the perspective of "know the end of the Lord," we will find that James's meaning is even more profound.

Those familiar with the Book of Job know that the dialogue between Satan and God, and Satan's subsequent attack on Job, are recorded in the first two chapters. Then, from chapter 3 to chapter 37, there is a lengthy record of the conversations between Job and his friends. These dialogues are very lengthy, and through them, Job's hidden emotions were stirred up. After such a long conversation, Job chapters 38 to 42 present God's words to Job and Job's final response.

In Job 42:5-6, Job says, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Previously, Job's fear of God was based on what he had heard about God, and he was willing to wholeheartedly follow God's words. While this was good, it was not a complete understanding of God.

Through Satan's attacks and the conversations with his friends, God finally spoke to Job personally. Job saw God with his own eyes. God was no longer just knowledge and doctrine to him but a personal experience. He saw a more glorious, holier, and more righteous God. As a result, he could only repent in dust and ashes. This is the reaction of anyone who truly sees God.

The Apostle John saw the appearance of the Lord on the island of Patmos, and it is recorded in Revelation 1:17, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." When God reveals Himself to man, who can stand before Him? Therefore, when James speaks of knowing the end of the Lord, it means experiencing the Lord fully, knowing Him completely, and submitting to Him entirely, which ultimately leads to the fulfillment of the Lord's will.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord's full compassion and mercy are not just about Him giving us abundant blessings, but about Him revealing Himself to us, allowing us to experience Him and receive Him. This gives us the strength to endure suffering

patiently until the Lord's return. Through Job's example, we see that it is not enough to just hear about the Lord; we must see the Lord with our own eyes. This is the ultimate outcome, and it is the greatest mercy and compassion God can give us.

Verse 12: “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’, ‘No’, lest you fall into judgment.”

When people are in the midst of suffering and cannot endure, it is easy for them to offend God with their words. James reminds the saints to be careful with their speech, especially not to swear: not to swear by heaven, not to swear by earth, and not to swear any oath at all. A person who guards their speech says "yes" when it is "yes" and "no" when it is "no," to avoid falling into judgment by saying the wrong thing.

James' teaching here is completely in line with what Jesus revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, the constitution of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 5:34-37, it is recorded, "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’, ‘No’. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." Heaven is God's throne, earth is God's footstool, and Jerusalem is the city of the Great King. Therefore, we have no right to use things that belong to God to support what we say.

Actually, this also reminds us that when we speak for God, we should use our experiences to testify to His word, rather than using God's word to support our arguments. We cannot even swear by ourselves, because we cannot control our own hair to change its color. So, let our words be 'yes, yes,' or 'no, no.' If we say more than this, it comes from the evil one. Those words are from Satan, and we will be judged for what we say.

Dear brothers and sisters, let our words be 'Yes' when it's yes and 'No' when it's no. This means our speech should be controlled, not speaking excessively, especially avoiding idle talk. Matthew 12:36-37 says, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Not only should we avoid idle talk, but also no corrupt word should proceed out of our mouth. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." We must control our tongues, speaking words that build others up and benefit those who hear. When we face trials and learn the lesson of patience, we must especially control our tongues. May the Lord help us.

Let's pray: Lord, thank You for showing us in the Bible how the Old Testament prophets set a good example of patience and suffering for us. Help us not only to hear about You, but also to see You with our own subjective experiences and have a complete understanding of You. Only then can we endure patiently in suffering and wait for Your return. Bless my daily life, Lord, that I may control my tongue, not speak idle words, and speak words that build others up. Help me endure patiently and wait for the return of Christ. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!