

**Pastor Tom Mortenson**

**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**James 5:10-11**

**Prayer:** *Father God, we do thank you, we praise you, we just give you worship for who you are and for what it is you've done for us. And Father, we thank you that we do have the freedom and we do enjoy the ability to come together corporately to offer up this worship and we know as Leon has said, there are many, many places where to do such is to take in your life in your hands and yet there are still believers who do that, and we just pray for them, we pray for the grace and strength that they need. We pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, Lord, as we enter into that part of the service where we open up your book, where we seek to find what it is you have for us, we thank you for James and the book of James that we've been working our way through, and we pray that your spirit would guide us, that you would accompany us and that you would enable us also to make these words of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Also just want to mention prayer for Tom Brozycki, he's doing children's church this morning, he's a big, huge guy, state trooper, and he's terrified. So give some prayer and some thought to him downstairs with all the little munchkins. Okay.*

I got a phone call, I got a phone call a while back, and it was from a dear saint, and she was in tears. She asked me the following question, she said: "How can I find the Lord's favor again?" I asked her what was going on, and she said, "I've lost the Lord's favor." Then she went on to describe this ongoing struggle she's having with an illness. And this dear saint was under a lot of pressure from a disease that was literally unrelenting, and the constant struggle with physical pain was wearing her down, it was causing her to think somehow or other God was angry, God was disappointed in her. Now, James' flock, we've been studying, they were also under a tremendous type of the same pressure. They had suffered oppression and persecution from their own fellow Jews and from a pagan civil government, and in James 5:7-8, he exhorted them this way, he said: *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

We've spent a lot of time examining the issue of patience, and I pointed out back a while back that James uses two different Greek words, both of which are translated "patience." One is the word "macrothumeo." "Macro" means "long." "Thumeo" means "temper."

"Macrothumeo" means patience that is long tempered. It's patience that is slow to anger. It's an imperative or command as in James 5:7: *Be patient -- be long tempered -- therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.*

Now, the other Greek word for "patience" is the word "hupomone." It's a combination of two Greek words: "Hupo" which means "under" and "meno" which means "to remain." "Hupomone" means "to remain under." It's the ability to hold steady. It's the ability to remain when the pressure of trials are putting you under. Hupomone conveys the idea that you are steadfast, that you are enduring, that you refuse to come out from under this trial and choose instead to stay with it, allowing God's grace to transform you through it, and it is far more than mere patience.

Well, our text this morning contains both patience and steadfastness. It's James 5:10-11. It says this: *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

Well, James speaks a great deal about patience and endurance and

steadfastness, and there is a reason for that. You see, as rational creatures, we have been made in the image of God and we've been given the ability to ponder, the ability to think, the ability to reflect. That is a good thing, but it's also a bad thing.

You know, animals are a part of the same fallen creation that we are part of, but when they suffer, they never ask the question why. You know, a few years back we were vacationing in Canada, and with all of the relatives, Janice's sister brought along her little Jack Russell Terrier, and at some point during the day, a very large German Shepherd got into the yard and went after the dog, chewed it up. We got the dog separated and later on that night, we were in a room with all of the kids, and I was watching this Jack Russell, and he's just sitting there and he's got his big -- you can imagine a dog with a grin on his face, he's wagging his tail and he's loving all the energy going on around him in spite of the fact that he has these ugly puncture wounds all around his neck. You see, the Jack Russell's suffering consisted in thinking, "Oh, boy, my neck is really sore" and "Oh, boy, I hope I don't see that dog again," but that's really it. You see, for certain, this dog is never going to ponder the existential unfairness of an unprovoked assault and a near death experience. He's just happy to be alive. An attack like that on a person, on a human being, would have traumatized somebody probably for life. The physical pain

would have gone away in due time, but the psychological pain, the unanswered question why, well, that would have remained.

We are compelled for some reason to find the answer why, and that often leads to false and painful conclusions. "Why can't I find God's favor any more" is the plea of someone seeking to find an answer to the question "why," and it's perfectly reasonable. So I took my friend to the Gospel of John and this famous exchange that took place between the disciples and Jesus in John 9:1-3. It says this: *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* You see, the disciples also had to have an answer to the "why" question, and as far as they were concerned, it was obviously a choice between only two options. They were speaking out what my friend was feeling.

But then Jesus introduces a third option that they'd never even considered. Verse 3: *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* That's an option we seldom consider. You see, our search for the answer "why" often leads us to conclude that when bad things happen, it's got to be the result of sin in my life, maybe something I can't quite put my finger on, but something nonetheless that I've done that is causing this pain. I think of a

line from those great theologians, the Allman Brothers. They have a line in one of their songs, it says: "It's all my fault; must have done somebody wrong." That's precisely how all of us think when we encounter suffering. You see, the disciples come across this painful situation, there's a man blind from birth, and they arrive at the only conclusion that seems reasonable. Somebody messed up here. I mean, either the man himself or his parents, but somebody must have done somebody wrong. Jesus gives them a whole new way to look and think about it, he says, "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" Now, we think of this as an exception when we should be thinking of this as the rule, because this is the reason that we have been put on this planet.

Once again, the Westminster Catechism answers the question: "What is the chief end of man" with the statement: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." If you look at what Jesus said to the disciples, his answer to the disciples is the exact working definition of what glorifying God consists of: "*But that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" That's what it's all about. I've said it many times, our lives are to be walking billboards actively displaying the character and attributes of God.

But here's the part that we seldom consider. That's this: The majority of time, that display of God's glory will involve stress, it will involve struggle, it will involve suffering, it will involve pain. And that's not my opinion; this is God's statement of fact. Listen to 1 Peter 4:12. It says: *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* Now, you might wonder why in the world is sharing in Christ's sufferings the venue that displays his glory? Again, listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:16. He says: *The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* God's glory is revealed through suffering.

You know, just stop and consider just for a minute if the opposite were true. What if God were to demonstrate his glory by granting us happiness and health and wealth and prosperity. I mean, if that were true, that what Christ was offering instead of suffering was a pathway to health, wealth, and prosperity, well then to be a

Christian would be to guarantee that we had that kind of success, and you and I both know if that were truly the case, this church would be filled to overflowing. We'd have to give out numbered tickets and folks would have to get in line like they do at the bakery or at the meat counter at Shop Rite. That's what this place would become. People would be falling all over themselves to have a relationship with someone who could fix every single broken thing in their lives. We've even seen evidence of that in Jesus' own ministry. Jesus miraculously feeds the crowds and instantly attracts a huge following who are not really interested in him but in what they could get from him. In John 6:26, it says: *Jesus answered them, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."* Today we have the proponents of the so-called prosperity gospel who claim that God really does want us healthy, wealthy, and wise. They reason that Jesus is the King of the universe and that so far so good, that's okay, but then they take it in another direction and they say as children of God, we are the king's kids and so we should expect to be treated like royalty. But how was Jesus treated? He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and although he was a king, he took on the form of a servant being obedient even to the point of death on a cross, and it is that obedience and, yes, that cross that he offers to us.

Matthew 16:24 says: *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* You see, what Jesus is saying here is that a life of denial, a life of crucifixion is the norm for believers, and yet when we find ourselves having to take up our own crosses, we wind up doubting either our own circumstance in life or God's place in that circumstance. Now I've said many, many times before, there's this proxy war that is going on between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness and we are the soldiers that are in the middle of this proxy war, and like in all wars, we are going to take casualties. Jesus said in John 16:33: *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

What we need to overcome the world is to understand where the battlefield is, where the places where the casualties take place; the battlefield is inside our minds. Our minds are where the war is waged. 2 Corinthians 10:3 says: *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*

You see, the hardest part of enduring suffering is not the suffering itself. It's understanding the "why" behind the suffering. That's where the argument lives. You know, if we can only have the mind of that Jack Russell Terrier, then suffering wouldn't take on all of this philosophical baggage that it carries. But God has made us with far greater capacities than the animals, and it is that capacity that allows our mind to start running wild. So then to take our thoughts captive is literally to chase them down, to lasso them, to hogtie them to the ground and then render them incapable of doing us any damage. And to do that, we need to look to the scripture, and this is the issue that James is addressing in our text this morning. James 5:10 says this: *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* See, what James is doing here is he is calling his flock to the monumental task of remaining patient in suffering, and here's how you do it. He's first reminding them of the grave dangers of grumbling. Now he wants them to get the ability to fix their minds on God's truths rather than the enemy's lies. In verse 10, he says: *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in*

the name of the Lord. Well, the prophets that James are referring to here are obviously the Old Testament prophets that James' Jewish congregation would be well, well familiar with, and if you look at Hebrews 11, you see this catalog of what's taking place in the lives of these prophets. Hebrews 11:32-34 says this: *And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.* And that is true, some of the prophets were great conquerors in God's Army. And we had Gideon who conquered kingdoms, we had Samuel who enforced justice, Daniel stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, David escaped the edge of the sword and became mighty in war, putting foreign armies to flight. So we can say God was working mightily in their lives. Verse 35 says: *Women received back their dead by resurrection.* And again, James' flock knew what he was talking about. They remembered that the widow of Zarepheth received an incredible blessing, a resurrection from the dead through the hand God through the prophet Elijah. And remember the prophet Elisha raised the Shumanite woman's son from the dead as well, marvelous, wonderful things that God has done through the prophets. But then we get to the second part of the passage. This

is Hebrews 11:35-40. It says: *Some were tortured, refusing to except release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wondering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, and since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

So what do we make of this? You see, God has just given us a catalog of horrors, all of which his saints had endured. But buried in that catalog, in that passage, is the key to understanding -- a key to understanding patience and suffering. This is one of the ropes that God gives us to lasso our thoughts and bring them captive to Christ. God is describing saints undergoing hideous torment with a profound sense of abandonment and then right in the center of a description of these floggings, stonings, other executions in the midst of this destitution, affliction and mistreatment, God makes what appears to be a passing editorial comment. He says in verse 38: *Of whom the world was not worthy.* This is a thought that has to be brought to bear on the

hundreds of thoughts that flow through our mind when the suffering and the reason why just doesn't seem to add up. This is the first rope that we use to lasso those thoughts that shout why can I no longer find God's favor? You have to listen to what God is saying here. *Of whom the world was not worthy.* See, two things are going on here. First, God is acknowledging that terrible and hideous things are happening to his saints. Secondly, he's also acknowledging that the world is not worthy of these saints. We seldom put these two thoughts together, but Jesus does. This is what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:32, he says: *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.*

You know, Jesus spent a good deal of his time warning the saints that this was going to come, warning them that these days will come and bad thoughts are going to come with them. God's word gives us yet another rope that we can use to lasso these thoughts in John 16:1-4. This is what Jesus said. He said: *"I have said all these*

*things to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do all these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you."* You see, Jesus literally brackets this bad news with warnings telling us this is going to happen because he knows how we react when we are under stress and pain and sorrow. James is addressing his flock by telling them to focus on these two truths that the prophets also had to focus on; number one, bad things do happen to God's people and God warns us ahead of time so that we will know we are still his people. James 5:11 says: *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. See, God has to remind us that again and again, even the prophets suffered.* Because when things go south, we get stuck in the very same road that the disciples were stuck in: *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* I am in pain and life is nothing but a struggle. I feel like God has abandoned me. I can't understand why. Must have done somebody wrong.

Let me just address this issue of free-floating guilt and stress, the stuff that comes when we are under pressure, when we are in pain. We often wonder what did I do? Can I tell you that God

never, never plays "gotcha" with us. He never plays that game where we have to guess what we've done wrong and he says, "Oh, you're getting warmer. Oh, you're getting colder." See, as believers, we have the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and part of the task of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin. John 16:8 says: *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.* And God's conviction of sin is specific and it's targeted. You know, last Tuesday night, that argument you had with your wife, you intentionally said things to hurt her and you need to ask her forgiveness. That's how the Holy Spirit convicts. On the other hand, the devil's conviction is a free-floating loose association. You are bad. You're useless. You are forsaken. You couldn't possibly be loved by God because of what it is you did. Nevermind that you don't really know what it is you did. See, there's no specificity in the devil's pseudo conviction because he doesn't want you to be reconciled to God. There's a reason why the devil is called the accuser of the brethren, because that is his stock in trade.

God says in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* And again, I've mentioned this many times before, the word for "confess" in the Greek is the word "homologeō" which means "to same speak." And that happens when God's Holy Spirit and

my spirit are both speaking the same language and when we agree with God's convicting Holy Spirit when he shows us our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. You see, God's spirit will never, never leave us guessing about the sin in our lives, and if we don't see it, it is because we have stopped up our ears and closed our eyes. It's not because God is obtuse.

There's a reason why God's Holy Spirit is very specific when he convicts us of sin, and part of that reason is because we automatically attach difficult and painful circumstances not to God's glory, but to our bad behavior. The enemy just loves to take advantage of that. You see, our default position when life suddenly gets hard is: Must have done somebody wrong. So when life turns difficult, we rack our brains for just the right sin, just the right failure or behavior that brought about our difficulties, thinking if I can just fix this, God's no longer going to be ticked off at me and suddenly my life's going to work and I'll have a life that's the picnic I always envisioned it to be. Jesus never said it was going to be a picnic. In fact, he went out of his way to say the exact opposite, and he did that so that when life is anything but a picnic, we wouldn't panic. Again, John 16:20, Jesus' words: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be*

sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you." What Jesus is saying is that sorrow here and now is normative for those who long for the kingdom. And what he says is it is a sorrow that will turn into joy when we see Jesus, but until then, we need the very thing James speaks of in our text this morning. Let me repeat it. James 5:10: *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

You know, some commentators wonder why in the world did James choose Job as an example of patience, because Job clearly lost his patience not only with his friends but with God. Well, the prophets were patient, but Job was steadfast. You see, in this text, the word for steadfast and steadfastness come from that other Greek word for patience: *Hupomone*. To remain under. Once again, I said it's the ability to hold steady, it's the ability to remain when the pressure of trials is putting you under. And *hupomone*

contains the idea that you are far more than simply patient, you are steadfast, you are enduring, you refuse to come out from under that trial and you choose instead to stay in it, allowing God's grace to transform you through it. That was Job's steadfastness. I mean, having lost everything, his health, his wealth, and his family, Job still remained under. And when he proclaimed of God in Job 13:15: *Though he slay me, yet I will hope in him.* He didn't know it, but the heavens were rejoicing. They rejoiced that he still glorified God and the devil got to eat a mouthful of dirt. And thousands of years later, God still gives us this as a rope to lasso our thoughts. So how do we do that? Well, we take every thought captive, we rope them, we lasso them to the ground with what? With God's answer to the question "why."

Joni Erickson in her book "When God Weeps" gives a great explanation of how that works. Listen to what she says. She says:

Try this story. You are walking down a street, minding your own business, when you are accosted and forced to carry a huge and heavy basket on your back. You are ordered to walk three blocks, turn left, go two blocks, turn right, then proceed straight on. Staggering under the weight, you stumble on, bewildered and angry. The weight of the basket is crushing. Your back is breaking. The

whole thing is meaningless and haphazard. You resent how the heavy burden consumes you, becoming a focal point of your entire existence. When you are halfway down the third block, reeling under the burden you finally bellow: "What gives?" Well, the truth is then revealed. The burden you are carrying is your child, injured and unconscious. "What?" On top of that, you discover that you are not trudging through a meaningless rat maze but the most direct route to the hospital emergency room. Immediately you straighten. You inhale new vigor. Your knees quit buckling. Adrenaline and fresh energy quicken your pace and you move forward with a new attitude. Why the change? The suffering you're going through now involves a relationship. Not just any relationship but one with your child.

You see, what Joni is illustrating is that the question of "why" has been answered. God answers it in his word, and that changes everything. You know, what marks Job as an outstanding example is that he remained steadfast really in the absence of any answer to those questions. You know, we all have the benefit of looking behind the curtains to see this great contest that Job was involved in but Job, he had no such insight at all. And yet in spite of profound sorrow and suffering, he remained steadfast. Again: *Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of*

*the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

Here's the key question for us to be able to find the answer to the question "why." Have you seen the purpose of the Lord? Have you seen how the Lord is compassionate and merciful? See, if you were a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the answer to that question has to be a resounding yes, because you know the God that we worship left heaven itself to flawlessly live his life among us as a man, that he went about doing good, preaching the kingdom of God, and to those whom he brought the good news, he received crucifixion. There never was a greater crime or injustice ever committed than to take the life of the only flawless person who has ever lived. We know they never took the life of Jesus. Instead, we know Jesus freely gave it. John 10:17, Jesus says: *"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father."* Jesus gave his life freely as a payment for sin for every one of his sheep, and because he took the full punishment of my sin, I now stand fully justified before God, and so does my friend who called me in tears asking, "How can I find favor with God?" Well, like I said, I pointed her to the Gospel of John where the man born blind is revealed by Jesus as someone chosen by God to reveal his glory

through blindness. I told her even if Christ's disciples could get it wrong, that she too could find it easy to forget that she had already found favor with God, that before the foundation of the world, God had chosen to fix his love on her, and it was my privilege to remind her of that. I told her that she, too, had been called by God to reveal his glory through her steadfast clinging to his goodness when sickness and exhaustion were shouting otherwise. James calls us to look to the prophets, destitute and afflicted, flogged, stoned, sawn in two, of whom the world was not worthy to find hope when things begin to look hopeless. James calls us to the life of Job, having lost everything. Job still remained under, proclaiming in Job 13:15: *Though he slay me, I will hope in him.* See, these are the ropes that God gives us to lasso our thoughts, to take them down and make them captive to Christ.

Let me give you one more example. This is 1 Peter 2:21. It says: *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* See, our task is to entrust ourselves like Christ did to him who judges justly. And to do that, we fix our

eyes like Jesus did not on one kingdom but two, the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven. Again, 2 Corinthians 4:16: *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* It is key for us to understand what God is telling us here through Paul. This is where our hope lies.

You know, we know that God's judgment is perfect. We know that God's judgment searches out every single imperfection in our lives because it must. We know that God tells us that every single word we utter is going to come under his judgment. We get that. We've heard it. I don't think we realize that the opposite is true, that God is equally committed to searching out every single momentary act of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, gentleness, and self-control in his sheep so that he can say: *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* God even tells us in Mark 9:41: *"For truly, I say to you, whoever gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward."* Understand what that means to those who are suffering. Psalm 56 says: *You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in*

*your bottle. Are they not in your book? God misses nothing. All things truly do work for an eternal good that we just can't see here on earth, but heaven sees it, and we will be blessed by these struggles eternally. When God says in verse 17: For this light and momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, he is telling us that eternity and the kingdom of heaven is watching intently and that every little bit of affliction we suffer is producing for us a glory that we can't begin to understand and will not begin to enjoy until this life is over. Our tears are all captured in a bottle. God is handing us yet another rope with which to lasso our thoughts. He does so because we are soldiers in a proxy war, and like all wars, we are going to take casualties.*

*Let me conclude with verse 11: Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Let's pray.*

Father God, I do thank you that we have something to offer when a dear saint says, "I have lost the favor of God." Father, how often we have that sense within us when things go south, must have done somebody wrong, and how much the devil delights in piling guilt upon guilt upon us. I thank you, Lord, that your Holy Spirit is

clear and is very, very plain in our understanding of what the conviction of sin is and that we don't have to labor under these free floating convictions that the devil tries to foist on us. I thank you for your word, I thank you for the examples that you've given to us "And the prophets in Job," in the words of Jesus, and I thank you for these ropes that you've given to us to lasso these thoughts and to bring them into submission, and I pray that you would give us the ability to do just that, in Jesus' name. Amen.