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The Perseverance of Job James 5:10-11

James in VV. 7-9 is calling his readers, though they are suffering persecution, to be patient and positive in light of the coming of Christ. Certainly I would like to think that we have honored those exhortations this week in respect to any difficulties that might have come our way as we seek to live a life pleasing to our Lord. But certainly this is not easy. And certainly it will not be easy to persevere if the Lord in fact does not return in the immediate future. It is difficult to continually focus on the blessedness of the imminent coming of Christ when we are in pain.

The Lord therefore, through James, puts before his readers certain examples of the blessedness of perseverance that hopefully will let his readers know that perseverance is not without a reward. Let us read **VV. 10-11**, “**(10) And as an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. (11) Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**” This weekend we will look at the examples that James gives his readers in these two verses. And hopefully, as we consider the specific examples of perseverance that James gives us in this passage, we will be personally encouraged to respond to difficult circumstances not as the world would respond but as the righteous would respond, not looking at the difficulties of our lives and being tempted to moan and groan, but rather, in the midst of our difficulties, looking for the blessedness that comes to those who endure both in this life, but even more importantly, in the life to come.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE PROPHETS

Look at **V. 10** and the first part of **V. 11**: “**As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. (11) Behold, we count those blessed who endured.**” Perhaps he was thinking of Jeremiah, who because of his unrelenting faithfulness in preaching God’s Word, was, according to **Jer. 38:4-13**, cast into an empty water cistern where he was left to sink in the mud. Had he not been rescued by Ebed-Melech the Cushite and thirty other men he would have died in the mud.

Courageous Micahiah withstood the lying prophets before King Ahab in **1 Kings 22:24-27**, delivering the true prophecy of the downfall of the kingdom. For this, he was slapped around, thrown into prison and fed only bread and water.

And so it was for Moses with his grumbling detractors, David fleeing Saul, Elijah on Mount Carmel, and Daniel in the lions’ den.

By New Testament times, the persecution of the prophets was proverbial, being referenced in at least eleven passages (**Matt. 5:12; 21:35-36; 23:29-37; Luke 13:33; Acts 7:51-52; Romans 11:3; 1 Thess. 2:15; Heb. 11:32-38; Rev. 16:6; 18:24**).

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In Stephen's sermon, which led to his own martyrdom, he declared in Acts 7:52, **“Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”**

Heb. 11:35-38 speaking about faithful prophets says, **“Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; (36) and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains, and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheep skins, in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated. (38) Men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”**

Were these prophets suffering because they had done something wrong? No! They were suffering because they were doing something right. Look again at **V. 11** They **“spoke in the name of the Lord.”** He who speaks in the “name of the Lord” speaks with His authorization as His delegated messenger.

Can we today speak in the name of the Lord? And the answer is, Yes! Not only can we speak in the name of the Lord, but we should be speaking in the name of the Lord. The church has been sent as His ambassadors to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Christ. This is the very reason why the readers of this epistle had been dispersed all over the Mediterranean world and were presently undergoing difficulties at the hands of the ungodly rich. The readers of this epistle are being reminded that their life experience is no different than what the prophets had experienced before them. And just like the prophets before them who were able to persevere, they also will be able to persevere and will be blessed for doing so.

How do they know that they will be blessed for perseverance or for their endurance? They should know this because of what they believe about the prophets. Look at **V. 11**, **“Behold, we count those blessed who endured.”** If the readers of the epistle believe that the prophets who endured were blessed, then they should be assured that they themselves will be blessed if they endure, if they persevere, if they hold on to their faith and seek to live a life pleasing to God. And the same assurance is true for us.

Living for the Lord and seeking to live a life pleasing to Him is not easy. It effects how we relate to our spouses, to our children, to our parents, to our employers, to our employees, to our neighbors, to our friends, and to strangers. It effects what we do with our time, our energy and our resources. It effects the very core of our being. Our flesh will cry out for satisfaction but we must buffet it and deny it. Living for the Lord and seeking to live a life pleasing to Him is not easy, but what is James communicating to his readers? It may not be easy but it is worth it. It may not be easy but those who endure will be blessed.

“To be blessed” is not the same as being happy. Happiness normally suggests a subjective, emotional reaction; ‘blessing’ is the objective, unalterable approval and reward of God. James is again reminding his readers not to focus on the difficulty of the race but on the reward that comes to those who run the race to win.

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James has already mentioned this concept in **James 1:12** **“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** What results in the crown? Perseverance under trial according to James 1:12. What results in being reckoned “blessed”?” Endurance according to James 5:11.

Are you persevering? Are you enduring? Are you continuing to do the will of the Lord even when it is difficult? When it is hard? When it is costly? Even when you are suffering for righteousness sake? Hopefully your answer is yes. But if you are struggling, James gives us another example.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF JOB

Look at **V. 11** **“..... You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”** The opening scene in the Book of Job presents a man who prospered in every way. The divine assessment of his life was that he **“was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.”**

The next scene transpires in heaven. All the angels came to present themselves to God, and among them was the fallen angel, Satan. **“And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”** Then the Lord said to Satan, **“Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”** Satan obviously knew about Job and responds **“Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to thy face.”** Satan in essence said to God, “No one serves You for who You are but for what they can get.”

As a result of this decision ,four very painful blows were inflicted on Job.

The Sabeans took all his oxen and donkeys and killed his servants (Job 1:15).

A fire from heaven consumed all Job’s sheep and killed his servants (Job 1:16).

The Chaldeans took his camels and killed his servants (Job 1:17).

And finally, all Job’s children were killed when the house they were in fell on them (Job 1:18- 19).

All of these happened in the same day and yet Job did not do what Satan said he would do. He didn’t curse and renounce God but rather it says in **Job 1:20-22** that **“Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped. (21) And he said, “Naked, I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”** Then in **V. 22** it says, **“Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”** Job passed the test.

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You might think that everything was over. But this was not the case. Satan again approaches the Lord in **Job 2:4-6**, “**Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face.**” How did the Lord respond? **Job 2:6** says, “**Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.**”

So Satan came to Job and afflicted him with running sores from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. Job went to the town garbage heap, found a broken piece of pottery, and began to scrape his festering sores. You might think, things could not get any worse, but then we read in **Job 2:9-10** “**Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”** In all of this Job did not sin.

Again you might think certainly nothing else could happen, but of course we know that it did. Next came Job’s three friends, who began by keeping their mouths shut in an eloquent silence of compassion. But then they spoke, three times each in rotating order: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. At first they were gentle with him, but when it became apparent that he did not agree that his calamity came because he was a great sinner, they became brutal. Finally a long-silent observer, Elihu, seethingly rebuked Job for his self-righteousness and urged him to repent.

In the midst of all that Job suffered, didn’t he ever struggle with his miserable life? And the answer is, Yes! We can endure and persevere in trials and yet struggle with our circumstances (Job 3:1,11-19; 30:20). We see Job’s struggle in certain passionate outbursts. Job cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1, 11-19). Job protested to God in **Job 30:20** “**I cry out to thee for help, but Thou does not answer me; I stand up, and Thou doest turn Thy attention against me.**”

But in spite of Job’s struggle with his circumstances, he never lost his faith in God (Job 13:15). In **Job 13:15** he declares, “**Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. The very greatness of Job lies in the fact that in spite of everything which tore at his heart, he never lost his grip on faith and his grip on God.**”

Clearly, Job endured well, but where is the blessedness? We obviously see at the end of the book of Job the restoration of all that Job had lost, twofold. But for me what is even more significant than the tangible rewards of the endurance of Job was the intangible reward.

Though Job struggled, he struggled well. And his struggle opened the door for a teachable moment. In **Job 38-41** the Lord Himself personally instructed him. Job needed to get a better handle on the immensity and majesty of God and relate to Him more humbly. Did Job learn his lesson?

Listen to **Job 42:1-6**, “**Then Job answered the Lord, and said, (2) I know that Thou canst do all things, And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. (3) 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. (4) 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me' (5) I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees Thee; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.**” Job prostrated himself before God in deep humility because he saw God’s greatness and his own finiteness. Job saw his presumptuous speech for what it was and repented.

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Now what I would like to point out to you is the fact that Job was, at this moment of enlightenment still on a garbage heap. He was still covered with running lesions. Flies still fed on him. His wife still loathed him. All his possessions were gone, and his children were dead. But he felt that he had been infinitely blessed, for he saw God as he had never seen Him before. And even though his miserable life had not changed, he was now at peace with his circumstances. It was after this that all that had been taken from him was restored to him twofold.

Truly we would have to agree with James at the end of **James 5:11** that the Lord is **“full of compassion and is merciful.”**

The God who revealed His abundant compassion and mercy in vindicating Job is the same today. The same spirit of steadfast loyalty to God under affliction will assuredly bring a fitting reward (James 5:11).

CONCLUSION

We must not allow ourselves to be persuaded by men or devils to think ill of God no matter how difficult our circumstances might become. He has a father's heart, even when He allows darkness to come. God cannot be unkind to his children. If we endure, we must know that we will be blessed.