

Perseverance

The Patience of Job

Foundation

Bible passage : James 5.11

The letter of James commends Job as an example of perseverance, although traditionally people have spoken of the “patience of Job”.

‘As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.’ (James 5.11)

The Old Testament book of Job is long but and therefore itself requires some patience to read it through. In the first two chapters we learn of Job’s faith, God’s approval and the how Job’s faith was tested by some terrible things that happened to him. In particular, all his children died and then he was afflicted by an unpleasant and very uncomfortable disease. Job’s friends rightly went to comfort him and sat with him in his misery. However, after a while there compassion gave way to finger pointing and they tried to persuade Job that the bad things that had happened to him were because he had done wrong against God. However, the reader of the book has already been shown this is not true. God was pleased with Job, he was not being punished, though God had permitted all that happened, but rather Job’s perseverance through trials demonstrated the depth of his faith and trust in the Lord and so brought glory to God.

Job persevered in two particular ways. First because he had to endure the terrible sadness of his children dying and the terrible hardship of his disease. He was convinced he had done nothing particularly wrong and that God had wronged him, but he kept trusting in God which must have been really hard. He persevered in his faith despite what seem to be good reasons to give up on God. Indeed, Job’s wife told him to curse God and die, but Job

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would not (Job 2.9-10). In the end Job’s perseverance was rewarded and his persistent trust was shown to be right.

Job also had to persevere when his friends were trying to convince him he was guilty of certain sins. Their constant accusations against him must have been hard to bear on top of everything else. It is

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easy to see how the speeches of his friends might have worn Job down, and the length of what is recorded in the book seems to underline this. But even through this pressure from friends Job was convinced that he was right, and the reader knows this too. But he wasn’t simply being stubborn in his view of himself but persisted in trusting God when he might have despaired. Eventually Job was shown to be right, and God spoke up for him.

Being a friend of God is not just about being a fair-weather friend. Perseverance in faith means continuing to trust God even when things seem to go against us and others try to persuade us we are wrong.



Job shows us how to persevere through tough times by trusting in God even when we find it hard to do so.