

PERSISTENCE IN PERPLEXITY

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The book of Hebrews describes the extraordinary faith of some of the Old Testament men and women (Heb. 11). Even so, James instructs us on patience by referring back to the steadfast sufferer Job (Jam. 5:11). While mourning the loss of all his children, and many of his servants, Job was stricken with what may possibly have been the worst medical tragedy of all time. Many people in America today jump off buildings because of the loss of loved ones. Many more slit their wrists yearly due to the inescapable pain that plagues them day in and day out from some sickness or injury. Job had no such intentions while suffering both. Sure, he questioned why this was happening and how it was good, but he never tried to end it and never blamed God.

Sometimes, brethren simply quit the church because they get tired. When Paul told the Corinthian brethren that “the saints shall judge the world” (1 Cor 6:2; KJV), he meant that as we succeed in living by faith and strive to enter the strait narrow way we condemn others by showing that it can be done. Job may very well be standing there to walk past at the judgment for all who gave up in the face of tiny little trials and with petty excuses. When in torment, it may be that suffering servant Job that they ask to quench their pain. Just like Abraham said in Luke 16, it may be Job saying then “son remember.” God expects and demands patience from us and that is exactly what James is saying in this epistle. There was only one man to grace the face of this earth whose patience exceeded that of Job, our Lord Jesus Christ. What is our suffering compared to that of Job or Christ? James said, “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam. 4:14). The Holy Spirit, through James, must have deemed it necessary to remind us of the thoughts Job had on human life in this world when he said, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Even when his friends mock him, he stayed true to God. So many today may stay faithful in the face of calamity, but when their friends offend them they will forsake God to get back at their friends. But what did Job do? Job stayed true to God.

Paul is one who we look to for insight on dealing with tribulation; he told Timothy to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 2:3). Paul was anything but a hypocrite in telling Timothy “stick it out,” for he had been through almost everything imaginable in his missionary journeys. Yet, Paul stayed the course through thick and thin. Wouldn't you like to know what Paul learned in the midst of all his hardships? He told the Philippians exactly that in his epistle to them when he wrote, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phi. 4:11). This may seem like no big deal when you think of Paul the prestigious Roman citizen who refers to his biggest problems as “light affliction” (2 Cor 4:17). But, consider Paul's resume:

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2 Cor 11 :24-27).

Remember the context of Paul's "light afflictions" and you are sure to see the same mind in Job. Paul wrote:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor 4:17).

Christians today must have the right perspective of life if they are to finish the race and receive the crown. "Farther along we'll know all about it," besides, we are "just a passin' through."~