

What about the Patience of Job?

James 5:11

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Patience is grown in the soil of delays and in waiting upon the Lord for an answer to prayer—waiting for the Lord to remove a trial, a hardship, or an affliction—waiting for the Lord to change the heart of one who resists walking in the path of righteousness and truth. It seems at times there is nothing more difficult for us than to learn patience while we wait.

Patience means that we must take our eyes off of our calendars, and rather cast ourselves upon our almighty, all-wise, and all-loving Savior, and humbly submit ourselves to His schedule, His plan, and His timetable. The Lord is never a second too late in all that He has purposed for us, His beloved children. Our duty is to call upon our caring Father for the needs that we have—His sovereign purpose is to come at the exact, precise time that will most glorify Him and most benefit us (even when we must wait and wait and wait). Our delays are God’s appointments. That is why we so much need to grow in patience.

There are two questions that we will seek to answer: (1) What Is Patience? and (2) Who Is Given as an Example of Patience?

I. What Is Patience?

A. The Greek word translated here in James 5:11 as “patience” literally means to abide or dwell under i.e. to abide or dwell under trials, hardships, afflictions, or delays. It’s quite the opposite of freaking out, stressing out, or running here and there without purpose or divine direction from God’s Word. Patience flows from resting in the Lord and submitting ourselves in faith, love, and obedience under God’s mighty hand, waiting for Him to bring His deliverance in His appointed time.

B. In order to better understand the meaning of patience (*hupomoné*, James 5:11), contrasting it with another closely related word might be helpful: longsuffering (*macrothumía*, James 5:10). Although these two words are similar (and at times used together in the same verse—Colossians 1:9-11), yet they have slightly different nuances.

1. Whereas longsuffering does not retaliate in anger under trial, patience does not give up or quit under trial.

2. Whereas longsuffering restrains vengeful anger, patience endures and will not surrender under the pressure of extreme trial.

C. Our God is described as the God of patience (Romans 15:5-6).

1. God’s patience is exhibited in His accomplishing His everlasting purposes in history, regardless of the opposition, hatred, and hostility of Satan, demonic forces, or man. The Lord is not in a hurry to see His eternal plan fulfilled. Though He hates the evil in this world, He is not worried or stressed out that evil may thwart His sovereign will.

2. This is a very hard lesson for us to learn, but life does not revolve around us or our schedule as to when God must work. Everything revolves around God’s schedule and timetable that He has set for His own glory and even for our own good as we wait patiently in hope upon Him. How do we know that we are hoping in the Lord? We know by our willingness to patiently wait upon Him.

3. Abraham tried to hurry the Lord up by way of having a child (Ishmael) through unlawful means (through Hagar, a concubine), rather than through lawful means (through Sarah his wife, who was unable to have children). After waiting 25 years, God miraculously gave Abraham the promised son (Isaac—

through whom Jesus would come).

D. What biblical patience is not.

1. Biblical patience is not being comfortable/cozy with sin as if we should continue in sin that patience may abound (Romans 6:1-2).

2. Biblical patience is not a hopeless resignation that since we cannot change people or circumstances, we do nothing. Patience is not inactivity. It actively perseveres in loving obedience to God's commands and in committing all to Christ while we wait upon Him.

3. Biblical patience is not laying down/playing dead, but is persevering in hope that God has not abandoned us. He is for us and with us, and He is working even if we cannot see it (Hebrews 10:36).

II. Who Is Given as an Example of Patience?

A. As James begins verse 11, he states that which is recognized to be true not only by him, but also by those scattered Jewish Christians to whom he writes: "Behold, we count them happy which endure", or more accurately, "Behold, we consider them blessed who are patiently enduring" (this is the participial form of the noun "patience").

B. Why are we blessed when we patiently endure?

1. Because by patiently enduring tribulation we become spiritually mature (Romans 5:3-4—"experience" is proven character).

2. Because by patiently enduring trials we grow in hope (Romans 15:4). The more we patiently endure a trial (by submitting ourselves under God's almighty/loving hand), the more we will hope in Him to bring to pass what He has promised/purposed for our good. The opposite is also true—the more we give up, the less hope we will have.

3. Because by patiently enduring hardships and afflictions we will inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:11-12).

4. We truly admire those that we read about or know that patiently persevere through the most difficult and trying circumstances, rather than those that wallow in self-pity, feeling ever so sorry for themselves, and rather give up in the face of trial. We esteem those Christians blessed who are willing to suffer the loss of all things and to patiently endure the most vicious attacks that are brought against them without forsaking or compromising the least truth revealed by Christ.

C. James next gives an explicit example of patience under severe trial, namely, Job ("Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord"). Let us briefly rehearse the extreme trials of Job and his perseverance through them.

1. Job's trials were not for some unrepentant sin in his life, but were due to an unseen challenge offered by Satan to God (Job 1:9-11). In this battle in the unseen world God displayed that His grace of patience will give believers perseverance in faith through the most anguishing trials (loss of all possessions and death of loved ones).

2. The Lord sovereignly grants Satan permission to bring the most severe hardships upon Job, except he cannot touch his body (Job 1:12). Satan destroyed all of Job's wealth, which was substantial, and killed all his children. What was Job's response (Job 1:20-22)?

3. The Lord then sovereignly permits Satan to bring upon Job whatever bodily affliction Satan wickedly desired, short of taking Job's life (Job 2:4-6). Satan brought the most painful boils and sores over Job's whole body (Job 2:7). What was Job's response (Job 2:9-10)?

4. Job's friends then accuse him of having committed some serious sin for which he was suffering God's punishment. He denies it.

5. Although Job under such severe trial simply wanted to die at times, although Job went through periods in which he struggled with the purpose of God in his loss and suffering, he nevertheless persevered by God's grace and he did not cast away his trust in the Lord, but looked in hope to God's deliverance (Job 19:25-27). He looked in hope to the resurrected Christ and to his ultimate blessedness at the resurrection.

6. In fact, as James indicates, there was a blessed "end of the Lord" in delivering Job and graciously blessing him for his patient endurance (Job 42:10).

7. The Lord was not taking a nap or on a vacation while Job was being severely tried in that fiery furnace. Our faithful God was in full control of all those events, only allowing Satan to go as far as He, the sovereign Lord, determined. Our gracious God set the limits and the boundaries, for He never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

8. Your life may seem as though the mercy of God has vanished and that there is no end to the suffering you endure. But look to the patience of Job and God's persevering grace to sustain Job, for that is why James has given Job as an example to us all.

D. What do we know by way of trial in comparison to Job?

1. If the Lord supplied patience to Job to persevere under such severe hardship, He will likewise grant that same persevering patience to you as well in whatever trial, hardship, affliction, temptation, upheaval that you may face (even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death). Jesus is not dangling a carrot before you just to tease you with the example of Job.

2. If the Lord caused Job to persevere in patience, He will do so for you. To think otherwise is to act as if God is a liar, or that He is merely playing games with you by offering Job as an example of patience. We would never have had the example of Job for our encouragement and comfort had the Lord not taken Job through this severe time of trial (that may be true of your life as others see your patience in hardships).

E. The cry of "how long, O Lord" has been often upon the lips of God's people amid afflictions, trials, hardships, weaknesses, and persecutions (Psalm 13:1-2).

1. Without persevering patience, those many pleas of "How long, O Lord" would crush our hearts under the heavy burden of despair and hopelessness in throwing up our hands and giving up.

2. However, the grace/fruit of patience, looks with hope to God's loving purpose and goal in what we suffer and endure in this life. That is what will carry us through all those trials when we feel like giving up. Patience will give you perseverance to finish the race (which is a marathon, not sprint)—just as Jesus persevered (Hebrews 12:1-2).

F. Do I need patience? Here are some questions.

1. Do I become frustrated by a slow car ahead of me or by waiting in a line at the grocery store or in waiting for God's answer?

2. Do I easily grow weary of the weaknesses of others (not the obstinate and flagrant sins of others)? Jesus was patient and gently corrected the sinful weaknesses of His disciples, but He was strong in His opposition to the obstinate and rebellious sins of the Pharisees.

G. Sometimes God's delays are due to our own delays, our own procrastination, our own excuses for our sin, and our own unwillingness to walk in communion with Christ in loving obedience to His commands. We cry, "How long, O Lord" will I have to be tested in this great trial. He cries back (as it were), "How long, My child, will it take you to learn the lessons that I send in this test?" What is the Lord teaching us by the trial that we yet need to learn? If nothing else, perhaps it is patience.

H. Finally, we read, “the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

1. The Lord Jesus is full of pity and of tender mercy toward you. As He was to Job, so He is to all His beloved children. When He afflicts you and tries you, He does so with infinite pity and mercy, dear child of God. His heart bled for you in the garden and on the cross. His heart is moved toward you infinitely more than the heart of a mother is toward her suffering child. He is touched with your infirmities.

2. Therefore, faint not. Cast not away your hope. Come to Jesus, for He will deliver you. He is patience personified.

3. No true Christian can claim he/she has no patience, for patience/perseverance has been already purchased by Jesus for you who trust Him as Savior/Lord. It is implanted within us by the Holy Spirit when we were born again. It is the spiritual DNA of Jesus (the Fruit of the Holy Spirit). Patience is yours in Christ—grow in it by the power of God’s Spirit living and working within you.

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