

THE PATIENCE OF JOB

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James 5:10-11 says, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*” Through all that he suffered, Job “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22; see also Job 2:10). God testified at the end of the Book of Job that His servant Job had spoken what is right about Him. Thus, Job is certainly one of the best examples that we have been given to follow of enduring suffering for righteousness’ sake.

Satan’s work versus God’s

The first two chapters of the Book of Job contain the description of Satan appearing before God twice, with God on both occasions asking Satan if he had considered his servant Job, “*that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil*” (Job 1:8; 2:3). And both times, Satan lived up to his name (“Satan” means *the accuser*), and accused Job falsely of only serving God because of the blessings and material riches that God had given him. Revelation 12:10 says of Satan, “For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” As he tried to destroy Job, Satan is also our adversary, and is walking about as a roaring lion seeking to devour us (1 Pet 5:8). But Satan could not operate against Job beyond the limitations that God placed upon him (Job 1:12; 2:6). By the same token, we are promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” First, Satan took away all of Job’s children and his possessions (Job 1:12-19). Next, he grievously afflicted Job’s body with pain and sickness (Job 2:7). Job overcame the immediate temptation to sin with his lips or charge God foolishly (Job 1:20-22). He also overcame his own wife’s efforts to be a stumblingblock to him, as she said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). “*But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips*” (Job 2:10). God has given us the spiritual armor that we need through His word to enable us also to “stand against the wiles of the devil” and to quench all of the flaming arrows he is shooting at us (Eph 6:10-18). If we choose to follow the Lord as Job did, then we will also see that God is more powerful than Satan. First John 4:4 says, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*”

The afflictions of the righteous

When using the mouth of one person (Job’s wife) did not succeed in causing Job to fall, Satan then used the mouths of his three friends. Job 2:11 says, “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every

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(continued)

one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” They sat down with Job in silence for a full seven days and seven nights (Job 2:13). Job broke the silence by cursing the day he was born (chapter 3). Eliphaz then began the chorus of false accusations against Job, saying in Job 4:7, “*Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?*” Bildad also preached the false doctrine that evil things only befall the wicked, and that the righteous will be rewarded with material wealth: “*If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase*” (Job 8:6-7). Of the wicked, Zophar said, “The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away” in the day of God’s wrath (Job 20:28-29). Finally, Eliphaz urged Job to repent of his alleged wickedness, so that he then could “lay up gold as dust” and “have plenty of silver” (Job 22:23-25). Job did not appreciate the condemnations of his friends and “comforters.” In Job 19:2, he asked his friends, “How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?” Job pled for their pity (Job 19:21). He said they were “forgers of lies” and “physicians of no value” (Job 13:4). He also said, “Miserable comforters are ye all” (Job 16:2). Their “comfort” was in vain, because their answers contained falsehood (Job 21:34). Job noted that the wicked do indeed prosper in this life. He said, “The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly” (Job 12:6; see also Job 21:7-13). This was an issue that the psalmist Asaph also wrestled with, as he then considered the ultimate condemnation and punishment that awaits all the wicked in eternity (Psalm 73). Job also understood that the righteous do suffer in this life, and for a good reason. Job spoke of “the trial of the innocent” (Job 9:23). He further recognized that God uses these trials upon the righteous to purify their faith. He said, “*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10). This remains the pathway of spiritual growth even under the New Testament. That this would be the case was even prophesied by Zechariah (Zech 13:8-9) and Malachi (Mal 3:1-4). Indeed, 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” James 1:2-4 similarly says, “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*” At the conclusion of the Book of Job, “The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: *for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath*” (Job 42:7). We truly have much to learn and be encouraged by from the example of Job!