

Endurance and Lessons



Why Do These Things Happen to God's People? (Part 14)
by Derek Prince

So, what was James' comment in verse 11? He points out two things:

> "You've heard of the perseverance [or the endurance] of Job and seen the end of the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

So the two elements in Job's story that James directs our attention to are, first of all, Job's endurance and, secondly, what God did for him at the end. But if Job had not endured he would have never come to that end.

God is more and more emphasizing to me how essential it is to cultivate endurance. I've said many times you never know how long a test will last. God puts you into a test and He hardly ever says this is going to last six months. You're left wondering. But God says to Himself it's going to last six months and you hold out for five months and 30 days and then you say, "I can't take any more, I give up." you were just one day short of God's blessing. So there's no end to endurance except enduring. I want to tell you, I'm not preaching a theory, I'm preaching something that I have to practice right now.

I think I'll take you to 2 Peter 1:5–7. This is the Christian life of progress and he says:

> "For this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, self control; to self control, perseverance [or endurance]; to perseverance [or endurance], godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."

So the Christian is a process of adding. What does it start with? It starts with faith, there's no other beginning. It says add to faith virtue. The best translation is excellence. The Greek word means a lot more than moral virtue. It says the virtue of a horse is to run fast. So add to your faith excellence. It's very important. If you're a nurse, become an excellent nurse. If you're a teacher, become an excellent teacher. If you're a janitor, become an excellent janitor. Whatever you did before do it now with excellence. That's the

proof of your faith.

And then it says to virtue you add knowledge. I don't think that's scientific knowledge, it's knowledge of the will of God as revealed in the scriptures.

And then to knowledge you add self-control. Here is a kind of bottleneck. To self-control you add perseverance, or patience. But I want to tell you, if you don't cultivate self-control you'll never achieve endurance because every time you're tested, your self-control will give way and you'll give up. So there's no way around these two. All the rest of the progress depends on self-control and endurance. Then you begin to move into the real pluses: godliness, brotherly kindness and love. And it encourages me to know that in this order that love is the ultimate. It's hard enough to have brotherly kindness, be frank with me. Just to love your fellow Christians is not always easy. Is that true? You don't have to say anything! But that's not the end. Love is loving everybody, even those who are not believers, even the unthankful and the unholy. But, it encourages me to know that it's the top of the progress.

But what I want to emphasize is endurance is an essential condition of entering into God's provision.

So, don't give up, hang in there. Just when it's toughest, don't give up because you'll miss it. I don't say you'll miss heaven, I'm not the one who knows who goes to heaven, but you'll miss the best that God has for you in this life.

We come to something that's subjective and I want to emphasize this is personal, this is my response to my little study in Job. It's lessons I have learned. I'm going to share them with you but I'm not saying they'll be the lessons that you learn. But, let me share them anyhow.

Number one, we can never understand all of God's dealings. Amen? So, don't get discouraged. You don't have to understand. What do you have to do? You have to trust, that's right. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Don't feel you have to understand everything. You have to trust, you have to believe God's goodness. Remember what I said on Sunday morning to those of you here, the real problem is mistrust of the goodness of God.

The second thing that this teaches me is very important. God never surrenders His sovereignty. The word Sovereignty has more or less dropped out of Christian vocabulary but it's a very important word. My definition of sovereignty is this: God does what He wants, when He wants, the way He wants, and He asks no one's permission. You've got to get adjusted to that. Don't think you can tell God how to do it. You can't. God never allows Himself to be put in a little narrow box of religious rules. I've seen people over the years put God in a box. It's got to be this way, you've got to follow these principles, you've got to do it this way. And invariably God pops up somewhere else outside their box. So don't bother. It's a waste of time.

I think religious rules are some of the biggest barriers to understanding God. I mean, I believe there have to be rules, there have to be rules in the church because we have to conduct ourselves in a certain way. Otherwise, there would be total confusion. But bear in mind the rules don't make us righteous. That's very important because if another group follows different rules it doesn't mean they're less righteous. See, if our righteousness depends on following rules and we're following the right rules, then nobody else is righteous. Which is exactly what happens in the church. So, one group thinks we're the only group that's right. The root problem is legalism. It's building your faith on keeping a set of rules.

Christianity is not a set of rules. God had given Israel a set of rules for fourteen centuries, His own perfect set of rules. And the result was a mess. Let me say this, rules and laws never change people's hearts. It's very important.

Laws can restrain evil but they cannot produce good. They have a purpose. I think a lot of American Christians, a lot of intercessors, are praying for the government to do the church's job. It's not the government's job to make people righteous, it's our job. And they're not changed by rules.

Love them. Testify to them. Pray for them. Don't condemn them. Jesus said God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The ministry of condemnation is the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a ministry of righteousness.

We can't box God in with our little rules. He absolutely refuses to be boxed in. If you try you can be sure of one thing, He'll emerge somewhere outside your box—probably behind you where you weren't even looking.

Point number three—and I've got ten to I've got to keep moving, but they're all related—God deals with us all as individuals. He doesn't have one blueprint for everybody. He has one specific, detailed plan that's a plan for every life, including yours and mine. Therefore, it is foolish to compare ourselves with other people, other Christians. 2 Corinthians 10:12:

> "For we dare not class ourselves [or compare ourselves] with those who commend themselves, but they

> measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

It is foolish to measure yourself by other Christians. You cannot say God did this for such and such, therefore God will do this for me. The fact that God healed Brother George or Sister Mary is no reason to believe that He'll heal you. That's not the reason. The reason is God's will and you have to find out God's will.

God has a special unique purpose for each life.. This I think is brought out very clearly in John 21, right at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry after His resurrection. He told Peter in John 21 what was going to happen to him in the future. Peter always had questions and being the leader he was free to ask the questions. I mean, that was part of the culture of the day. The rest of them really couldn't ask questions the same way as Peter did.

> "Peter, seeing John behind, said, Lord, what about this man?"

You told me about myself, what will happen to John? And Jesus said to him:

> "If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow me."

In other words, it's not your business. So, don't base your expectations on what God has done in somebody else's life. All right? Because God has got a special purpose for you, something exciting, something specially tailored to you. He tailors His plans individually. He's got no mass produced suits or dresses, every one is made to measure.

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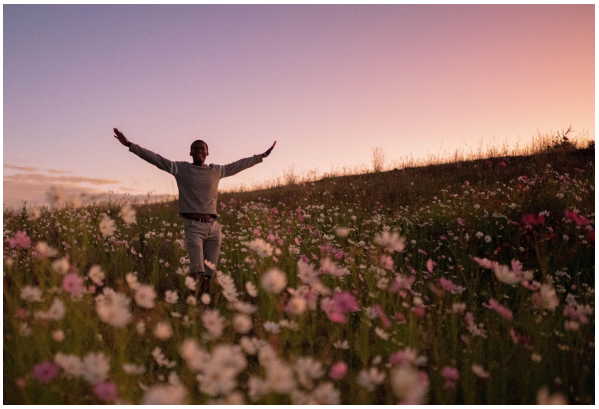

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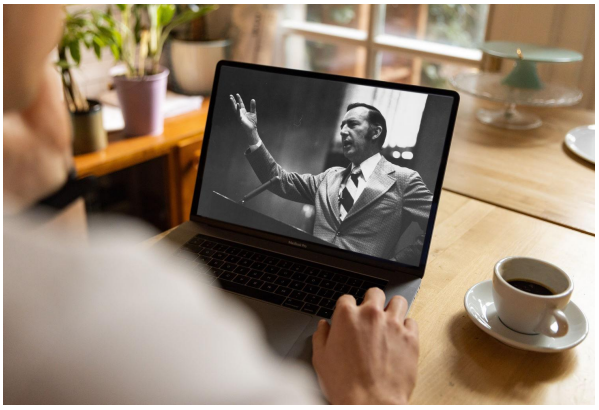

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