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4/30/23

James 5:10-11

Patient in Pain

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of any people in the Old Testament who suffered? What can we learn from their life?
2. Why do you think people equate suffering with God not caring? Have you ever felt like God didn't care for you because of suffering? Can you share? Was it resolved?
3. What can you take away about life from this study? How does this kind of knowledge help you live?
4. How is our suffering different or similar to the experience of people like Jeremiah or Job?

As James has been encouraging us with being patient...
...he gives us a specific example.

One of the most difficult times to be patient is in suffering.

It is one thing to wait at the DMV or wait in line at Costco...
...It is another thing to wait patiently in our pain.

To wait patiently as we walk through pain or sickness or loss...
... is another level of patience.

Title: Patient in Pain

James 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

James goes to the OT, and uses prophets as an example.

Why would he use prophets as an example?

One reason might be that everyone knew them...
...They were well known to every Jew.

But an important reason is...the Prophets served God.

They are close to God, they hear from God...
...they are in right relationship with God.

And...Sometimes we think...
...if I serve God, I won't suffer.
...Or if I get close to God, nothing bad will happen to me.
...But...we see those assumptions are not true.

1. Everyone suffers.

Good people, close to God people, servants of God people suffer.
Prophets like Jeremiah and Daniel and more suffered.

Jeremiah served a people that wouldn't listen to him.
He was betrayed by his own family.
He was beaten and put in stocks.
He was imprisoned by the king and threatened w/ death.
He was thrown in a cistern.

Daniel was captured by enemy forces and taken away from his family to a far away land.
His name was changed, his identity was challenged, people schemed against him and he was thrown into a den of lions.

These guys were good people that served God and suffered.

2. Suffering doesn't mean God doesn't care.

James is telling us...
...If you think that suffering is out of the ordinary, wrong.
...It happens to everyone.

If you think that suffering doesn't happen to godly people—wrong-
...it happens to very godly people.

...And...

If you think suffering means God does not care for you, wrong-
...it doesn't have anything to do with His care for you.

Suffering is something that happens to everyone.
It happens to good and godly people.
And it has nothing to do with your value or love before God.

Jeremiah was personally called by God.
God spoke to him, encouraged, and cared for Jeremiah.
God was pleased with him, and he still suffered.

We are told by an angel, Daniel was greatly beloved by God.
And he still suffered.

**The 3rd reason James uses the prophets as an example...
...is because God used them.**

3. God uses people that suffer.

God used them in their suffering and through their suffering.

Sometimes we think our suffering or pain limits God's use of us...
...It may limit what YOU want to do for God...
...but it won't limit what GOD wants to do through you.

God used Jeremiah in the cistern.
God still used Daniel in Babylon.
Paul in prison and Christ on the cross.

God's plans will not be hindered by our pain unless we let it.
In fact, your pain may magnify His power.

For believers...

God has allowed the suffering and...

...He will incorporate it into His purpose...

...I don't know how or why...but I know He does.

Romans 8:28 He works all things for good to those that love God and are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**And the last reason James used prophets as an example...
...is they suffered well.**

What does it mean to suffer well?

You suffer but you are patient...

...you may get angry at God and everyone...

...but you don't stay angry.

Patience is the ability to go through difficulty and discomfort and not get upset or angry or quit.

4. Suffering patiently is possible

They were not moved from trusting and obeying God.

Jeremiah suffered because of his obedience.
But he kept serving and speaking for the Lord.

Even when he got tired of it and wanted to stop, he didn't.

Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak anymore in His name." But *His word* was in my heart
like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of
holding *it* back, And I could not.

Daniel was taken away captive, separated from his family, his
home, and everything he knew.

...But he didn't turn his back on God, he persevered patiently.

Daniel honored God, he served God, he prayed to God...
...and he was used by God.

We could go on and on with the people in the Scripture who are
examples to us of those that suffered well because they were
patient.

- They didn't allow their suffering to stop their serving.
- They didn't allow their pain to stop them from pleasing the Lord.

The fact is, on this planet, everyone suffers.

Some suffer more than others, and in different ways than others.
But no one gets out of here without suffering.

The example of the prophets is this...

Good people suffer, godly people suffer, but...

...you can suffer and still be patient and serve God.

I think that is one of the things that is the most common reasons people walk away...suffering.

People suffer or they see suffering, and they just can't get their head around how God would allow it.

But the fact is God doesn't just allow it, He entered into it...

...Jesus came to earth and He suffered with us and for us.

Jesus lost his dad, His friends abandoned Him, He grew up poor. He was tempted, He was tried, He was betrayed, He was beaten.

God did not avoid suffering...

...He entered into suffering with a purpose.

And that is what most people are looking for...

....It can't just be meaningless, purposeless, senseless...

...It has got to mean something.

They create a foundation, start a fund, try to change something.

But if you are a believer, if you are a Christ follower...

... your patient suffering does mean something...

...It is a testimony of your faith in a faithful God.

...You can say, follow me, and it means something.

5. Suffering patiently glorifies God.

Our patience in suffering demonstrates that we are trusting God. We are trusting His plan, His purpose...And He is trustworthy

BUT...James goes further in v11...

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure.

They are blessed/happy who endure, continue, remain or abide.

The storms come, the wind roars, and when it all blows over...

...there they are...enduring.

When the fight is over and the smoke clears...
...they stand victorious.

What a great feeling to stand when everyone else has fallen!
What a great joy to endure when everyone else quit!

Suffering is a spiritual battle.

Whether it is the devil, God's refining, or your own dumb choices..
...Suffering is often a fight for your faith.

Will you keep trusting God when you are pummeled with pain?
Will you keep trusting God when you are frustrated with failure?
Will you keep trusting God when you are engulfed in grief?
Do we follow God because we believe He is real and right.
...Or for what we can get...

If we only follow God because of the payoff...
...we are just mercenaries.

And that is basically what Satan said to God about Job...

And that is who James brings up next...

6. Suffering reveals our hearts.

Job is the granddaddy of suffering.
Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible...
...and it deals with one of the oldest problems in the world...
...the problem of the righteous suffering.

If you don't know the story...

Job 1:1 There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil.

6 One day the members of the heavenly court[a] came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan,[b] came with them. **7** “Where have you come from?” the Lord asked Satan.

Satan answered the Lord, “I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that’s going on.”

8 Then the Lord asked Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.”

9 Satan replied to the Lord, “Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. **10** You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! **11** But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!”

12 “All right, you may test him,” the Lord said to Satan. “Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.” So Satan left the Lord’s presence.

All in one day, Job lost everything he owned.

His sons and daughters died in a tragic accident.

And Job’s reaction...

1:20 Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. **21** He said,

“I came naked from my mother’s womb,

and I will be naked when I leave.

The Lord gave me what I had,

and the Lord has taken it away.

Praise the name of the Lord!”

22 In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.

He grieved, he wept, he shaved his head and fell to the ground.

But He didn’t stop believing in and praising the Lord.

Job questions, struggles, and gets angry.
He doesn't understand it or like it.
He wishes he had never been born.
...These are human feelings—We may feel like this.

But this is what James says...

You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by the Lord*—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

In all of that, Job persevered. He endured.

When the dust settled, he was still standing.

But I want you to notice the second half of that verse.

We also see God's intention and God's character.

When it is all said and done...

...Job is standing and God is speaking.

And in the end, the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

In the end.

In the beginning...

...it doesn't seem like God is compassionate and merciful.

In the middle, it doesn't feel like that.

But in the end, you can see it.

We see that God blessed Him with children and restored his possessions.

But that doesn't take away the grief of the earlier loss.

These are not replacement children...but they are children.

I am sure he continued to grieve...

...but he was also able to rejoice.

What a powerful testimony to be able to both grieve and rejoice.
To mourn, but not without hope, to suffer but not without faith.

Besides his wealth and children...

...The other change was in Job and how he saw God.

In the end, Job 42:5, **he said, I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. Therefore I retract my words, and I repent in dust and ashes.**

Over and over, people that have gone through suffering share...

- how it changed their life,
- how it was the best thing that could happen to them,
- how it was so painful, but it was so purposeful.

And part of the purpose of suffering is seeing ourselves and seeing the Lord...this the relationship that will last.

In our suffering, may we bear it patiently and endure to the end,
...and in the end may we see the compassion and mercy of God who has plans and purposes that are beyond this temporary life.