

## Publishing Editor's column

WHEN James commends "the patience of Job", he is not referring to what we might consider to be patience, but rather endurance, as the preceding words, "Behold, we count them happy which endure", show (5:11). This is supported by the fact that Job's replies to his friends do not show what we would consider to be patience, and surely what James is commending in Job is the way in which he endured the blows that came upon him successively, as recorded in chapters 1 and 2.

It is difficult to imagine a worse sequence of events than those which happened to Job at that time: the theft of his oxen, asses and camels, the slaying of his servants, the death of his children in a mighty storm or whirlwind, and finally what must have been a very painful and distressing illness. His response to the first series of blows was: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21); and, on the loss of his health: "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (2:10). And so it is recorded that "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (1:22), and "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (2:10).

There is an enormous gulf between the attitude of Job in the face of suffering and loss, far beyond the experience of most of us, and the attitude of many today. People now expect a certain standard of health, a certain level of provision of material things, and protection from all harm and loss. When loss is experienced people look for someone to blame, for some authority to compensate them, for someone to sue. People use human suffering as an excuse not to believe in God, or, when suffering hits them, lose their faith in God. Some, overwhelmed with problems, even seek refuge in suicide, something which Job never spoke of, although in his agonies he at times wished he had never been born.

We in the Western world are protected as never before from poverty and ill-health, but there are still times when afflictions come upon us that require us to show "the patience of Job". Bad things still happen to those who are striving earnestly to follow God's ways. Whether or not they are directly brought about by God, we must accept that they are always in accordance with His will, for He clearly has the power to prevent bad things happening to us. If, then, we have suffered loss, or are experiencing major difficulties and problems in life, let us accept, as did Job, that such things are part of this present system of things, and that we are not exempt from them. What we do know is that, if endured in the right attitude of mind, the difficulties of life help to prepare us for the time to come when mortality and its consequences will be no more. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Can we echo that sentiment?

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