

The Chief End of Man  
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James 5:11

(NA 27<sup>th</sup> ed.)

(NKJV)

ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας·	Indeed we count them blessed who endure.
τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰὼβ ἠκούσατε	You have heard of the perseverance of Job
καὶ τὸ <b>τέλος</b> κυρίου εἶδετε,	and seen the <b>end</b> <i>intended</i> by the Lord—
ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ κύριος	that the Lord is very compassionate
καὶ οἰκτίρμων.	and merciful.

A macarism is a beatitude in English; to macarize is to make happy. Greek *hupomenō* is built from *hupo-* (English “hypo,” meaning “below, beneath”) and *men*, as in “re-main.” This becomes hypo-main, or “to endure.” Greek *hupomonē* is its noun form, “perseverance.” “Job” is readily identifiable. Line 3’s “end” is *telos*, as in telic or the teleological argument (for the existence of God). “End” in the sense of “purpose;” “What is the chief end of man?” NKJV italicized “intended” since it represents no particular Greek word. In line 4, English *polu* = “poly.” Splanchnic nerves furnish the viscera. Together in English, the word is “poly-visceral” or “very compassionate.”

This is the only place in the New Testament that refers to the person of Job. It is part of a larger argument which begins at 5:7, “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.” The context is about how Christians ought to live, patiently today, not grumbling, until the Lord returns. James then cites the prophets who suffered for the Lord. Finally, he cites Job to make the same point.

Consider the book of Job. He is presented as perfect before God. (I know that Reformed theology will not admit a sinless man except Jesus. But in its

literary presentation, Job is meant to be read as undeserving of what happened to him. Otherwise the book is more or less pointless. Think of it as poetic license.) He is “blameless and upright” to such an extent that Yahweh singles him out for commendation in heaven. It is because he was righteous that heaven decreed to test him with a season of agony. He didn’t suffer because he sinned; he suffered in order that he might sin.

James treats this period of terrible pain as analogous to the Christian life. It is as if we are all living through Job’s anguish, and like him we must persevere until the end. In our case, the end is when the Lord returns (5:7).

But notice James’ words. I think he refers to the end of the book of Job. Remember that Job was finally restored. His latter wealth was twice what it had been before (42:10). He lost seven sons and three daughters in the beginning (Job 1:2), and he had seven sons and three daughters in the end (42:13). This complete and surpassing restoration is analogous, the way I read James, with the return of Jesus and the resurrection. In fact, it is as if Job received the same children back from the dead. I know he didn’t really (poetic license again), but the way it reads allows a reader who believes in the resurrection to imagine that.

Restoration, by the way, is the ultimate answer to the problem of pain. Job suffered—and his basic right standing with God was vindicated in the end not only in Yahweh’s appearance but also in his own restoration. Of course, eventually Job must have grown old and finally died. What then? Where is the answer to that? Again, the ultimate answer to even that is restoration. And that is the point that James is making.

Like Job, we suffer now as saints. And like Job, we have an End, a final Vindication for which to look forward, the ultimate answer to our distress. This is when Jesus returns and restores us and all we have lost.

So, says James, remember the chief end of Job. Persevere now, waiting for the coming of the Lord. You may suffer and even die, but that is only a temporary setback. When Jesus returns, you will be as restored as Job was in the end. Your *telos* is to glorify God now, while looking forward to enjoying him forever. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!