

Choosing To Go On (Abridged)

By Terry Slack

No doubt many are familiar with the story of Daniel Ruettiger. Known as "Rudy," he dreamed of playing football for Notre Dame. After high school, he set out to prove he was not a dreamer, but a doer. Coaches and players considered Rudy too small, too slow, and too average to make the team. What he lacked in size and athletic ability, however, he made up for in determination and heart.

Rudy became a walk-on scout-team player, absorbing punishment while helping the starters prepare for games. Though possessing a fraction of their ability, he exerted twice the effort. His perseverance inspired his teammates, who persuaded the coach to let Rudy suit up for his final game. In the closing seconds, Rudy entered the game, made a memorable play, and was carried from the field on his teammates' shoulders.

We love stories about people who go on despite adversity. Unfortunately, we often focus on the happy ending while overlooking the suffering required to get there. We imagine being carried on teammates' shoulders but ignore the years of punishment that earned the ride. We dream of great things, but few are willing to pay the price. When the going gets tough, many simply stop going.

James 5:11 directs us to another example of perseverance: Job. He remained steadfast when there seemed to be nothing left to cling to but God Himself.

Job possessed great wealth, yet he had gained it while maintaining integrity and righteousness. He was spiritually devout, a faithful husband, an involved father, and an honorable man. Then, suddenly, the wheels came off his life.



Satan charged that Job served God only because God blessed him. Given permission to test Job, Satan stripped away his wealth and his children. Yet in his anguish Job continued to worship God (Job 1:20-22). Satan then attacked Job's health. Even when his wife urged him to "Curse God and die," Job replied, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (2:10). How could Job go on when everything seemed to say, "Quit"?

First, his moral compass was correctly set. Job understood that God had given him everything he possessed and therefore had the right to take it away (1:21). Job knew nothing of the heavenly conversations behind

his suffering. Though convinced of his innocence and desperate for answers, he continued walking in God's ways (23:11-12; 27:2-4). All Job had left was his integrity, and he refused to surrender it. Circumstances may take our possessions, health, and happiness, but no one can take our character except us. Suffering reveals who we really are.

Second, Job held to a fixed point of reference: God's character. Though he could not understand what God was doing, he declared, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (13:15). Job knew far less than we do. He did not know Satan's role, the limits God had imposed, or how the story would end. Yet he persevered because his eyes remained fixed on God.

Third, Job looked beyond himself. His friends offered flawed arguments, harsh accusations, and self-righteous judgments. Yet Job ultimately prayed for those men (42:7-8). He refused to let bitterness control his future. Perseverance requires moving forward without allowing pain to harden our hearts.

Finally, Job trusted God to make things right. Expecting death, he still looked beyond this life: "Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God" (19:26). Job had no written Bible and knew far less of God's redemptive plan than we do. Yet he was convinced that his Redeemer lived.

Life contains difficult valleys. We admire those who keep going through them. The remaining question is very simple: when adversity comes, will perseverance also be our story?

