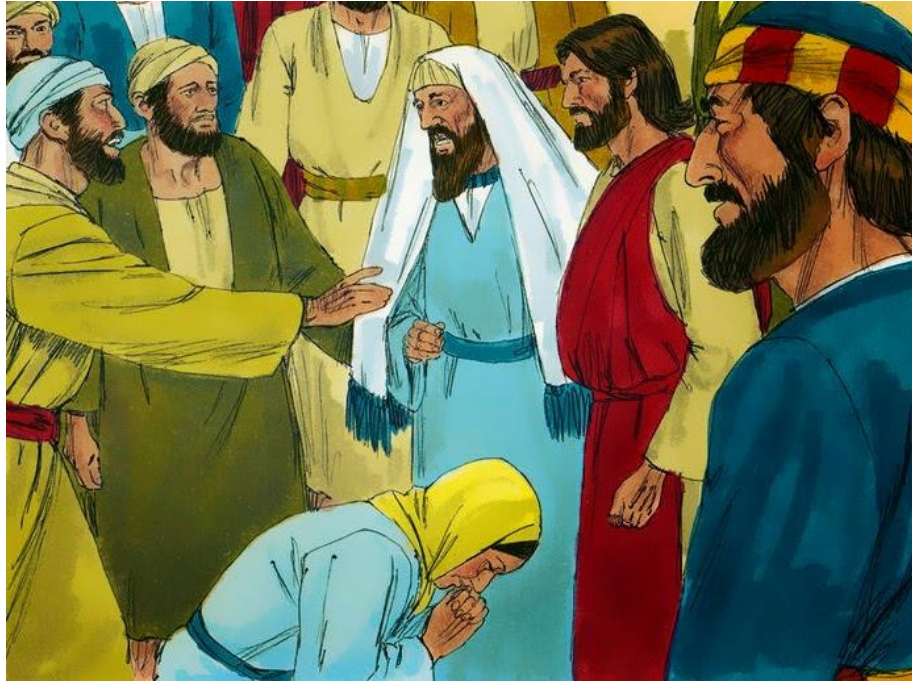


Expect the Unexpected

By Judy Taylor



One of my favourite flowers is honeysuckle. I love the sweet scent when it's in full bloom, a real summer smell. We have a trellis by the front door of our house and my hope was to grow a honeysuckle to climb up it so the scent would welcome anyone coming to the door. To plant this, we had to remove some paving which exposed a lot of gritty substance which was covering pipes leading into the house. I put good soil into the area and last summer I planted a lovely new honeysuckle, watered it diligently and as it was already established it flowered. However, this year it has died and I'm pretty sure it's because there wasn't sufficient depth or enough good quality soil. I've tried unsuccessfully in the past to grow things in this area and it has been the same result.

Then, about a week or so ago something amazing happened. This lovely plant appeared, a Verbena, it had grown tall, its stems spreading out with a lovely purply-mauve flower on each one. The truly amazing thing is that it has grown not from the soil area where the honeysuckle is but from a tiny crack in the paved area around the door. I cannot imagine how this plant can have survived in this heat, (I haven't watered this area) and managed to grow so beautifully. It doesn't have a scent but somehow its very existence against all the odds says something much more and I will cherish it and water

it and be very thankful for it. An example of resilience which surprised and delighted me especially as I had given up imagining I would have anything growing in this place.

Throughout the bible, resilience emerges as a response to God's faithfulness. The Israelites endured wilderness wandering because God went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire. Elijah found strength to continue his prophetic mission not through sheer determination but through divine provision — bread baked on stones and water by his head. Even Jesus, in His humanity, models a resilience shaped by prayer, obedience, and unwavering trust in the Father. His endurance in the face of suffering reveals that true resilience is inseparable from relationship with God.

This biblical example challenges modern assumptions that resilience is primarily about self-mastery or emotional control. Christian resilience is not stoicism. It does not deny pain, nor does it pretend that hardship is easily overcome. Instead, it acknowledges suffering honestly while refusing to let suffering have the final word. It is hope that persists because God's promises persist. It is the quiet conviction that "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength," not because they are strong, but because God is.

The New Testament repeatedly calls believers to bear one another's burdens, suggesting that endurance is strengthened in community. We are resilient not only through personal faith but through the shared life of the Body of Christ, where encouragement, prayer, and mutual support become instruments of God's sustaining grace.

Two Sundays ago, we heard the story of the Canaanite woman who implored Jesus to heal her daughter who was tormented by demons. Jesus and his disciples had gone to the district of Tyre and Sidon outside the Jewish territory, possibly to get away from the troublesome Pharisees. Unexpectedly this woman appears and begs him to heal her daughter. Jesus was silent for a while; he wasn't simply a travelling doctor whose task was to heal every sick person he met. He had a very specific calling which was to God's people Israel and this calling, God's message was to his chosen, his special people, if God's new life was to come to the world, it would come through Israel. But as with so much of what happens in Jesus' public career, the future keeps breaking into the present – even as here, seeming to catch Jesus himself by surprise. He has already commented on the remarkable faith of a Gentile Centurion and now he comments on the equally remarkable faith of a Canaanite woman. Her resilience, her complete faith that Jesus could heal her daughter was why Jesus responded in healing her.

Resilience, from a Christian perspective, is never merely the human ability to “push through” difficulty. It is between divine strength and human trust, where God’s sustaining grace meets our fragile endurance. Scripture consistently presents resilience not as self-generated toughness but as a posture of dependence — a willingness to stand firm because God stands with us. Christian resilience begins by recognising that our capacity to endure is rooted not in ourselves but in the God who holds all things together.

We may find this in the most unexpected places or people or in ourselves. Whatever the circumstance we can be sure that we do not have to carry this alone, through God’s grace he stands with us, along side us and remains faithful to his word to the end of our journey.