

"LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK."

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." – *Jas. 1:4.* –

THE term "patience" carries with it the thought of meek, uncomplaining endurance of suffering with humble resignation and perseverance. It is a trait which indicates strength and self-discipline. It cannot be predicated of inexperienced persons, but only of characters which have been subjected to trials of affliction, pain or loss; and it always shines brightest when manifested under the glowing heat of severe affliction. This trait takes a very prominent place in the galaxy of Christian virtues; for without it the heart would grow faint, the head weary; and the steps would soon falter along the narrow way in which the Church is called to walk. "In your patience possess ye your souls," said the Master, implying the danger of losing our souls, our existence, if we fail to cultivate this grace which is so very necessary to our continuance in well doing.

The Apostle James does not overstate the matter when he intimates that the perfect work of patience will make its subjects perfect and entire, wanting nothing; for the Apostle Paul assures us that God, who has begun the good work of developing character in us, will continue to perform it until the crowning day – the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6.) All his children will be subjected to just such discipline as they need for the correction of faults, the implanting and development of virtues, and for their training and establishment in righteousness, so that they cannot be moved. "If ye be without chastisement [discipline and correction], whereof all [true sons of God] are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye [patiently] endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" – Heb. 12:8,6,7.

This great work of developing and training character is necessarily a slow and tedious one, and not infrequently it is a painful process; and the patience that cheerfully submits to it is begotten of a high appreciation of the ends to be attained by it. It is begotten of a love of righteousness, truth and godliness, and is therefore most noble and praiseworthy.

But how can we let patience have her perfect work? Just by meekly doing the best we can each day, and doing it cheerfully and well; making the best of every thing and going forward daily with true Christian fortitude to act the noble part in every emergency of affliction, pain or loss. To-day's trial may be a light one, perhaps almost imperceptible; or to-day may be one of the sunny days in which God bids our hearts rejoice in his overflowing bounty. To-morrow may bring its cares and its petty vexations that irritate and annoy. Another **[R1721 : page 333]** to-morrow may witness the clouds gather above our heads, and as the days follow each other the clouds may grow darker and darker until we are forcibly reminded of that strong figure of the Psalmist – "I walk through *the valley of the shadow of death.*" Yet never will the valley grow so dark that the patient, trusting one cannot triumphantly exclaim, "***Though*** I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou [my Lord] art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Yes, there is comfort in the "rod" (of chastisement), as well as in the "staff" (of providential care); for both are designed for our ultimate profiting.

The Apostle Paul tells us plainly that tribulation is necessary for the development of patience – "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." (Rom. 5:3,4.) Consider how your own experience has verified this, you who have been for some time under the Lord's special care and leading. How much richer you are for all the lessons of experience, and for the patience that experience has developed in you! Although, like the Apostle, you can say that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of

righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11.) In the exercise of patience the lessons of experience have made you stronger. They have increased your faith and drawn you into closer communion and fellowship with the Lord. They have made you feel better acquainted with and to realize more and more his personal interest in you and his care and love for you. And this in turn has awakened a deeper sense of gratitude and an increasing zeal to manifest that gratitude to him. This also deepens the sense of fellowship with God, and gives confidence to the hope of final and full acceptance with him as a son and heir, worthy through Christ.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and [strengthen] the feeble knees" – "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The Apostle James urges that we take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Then he cites the example of Job and the manifest end or purpose of the Lord in permitting him to be so sorely tried: how the Lord was really very pitiful and of tender mercy, although the pity and mercy were not manifest except to the confiding faith that said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" – until the long and painful discipline had yielded the peaceable fruits and the subsequent rewards of righteousness.

There is little virtue in the patience that endures merely from motives of worldly policy, though even that often has much advantage in it. Men in business dealings with fellow-men well know that an impetuous, turbulent disposition is greatly to their disadvantage, while patient consideration, temperance in judgment, and good self-control are of immense value, even from a worldly, business standpoint. But the patience that is begotten of deep-rooted Christian principle is the kind that will endure all trials and shine the brighter for every affliction through which it may pass.

Job, the servant of God, was accused of selfish policy-motives for his remarkable patience and faithfulness; and it was boldly affirmed that if he were tried by adversity his mean motives would be manifest – that he would curse God to his face. But God knew better; and it was in Job's defence that he permitted him to be tried to the utmost that the loyalty of his heart might be manifest. Some of his poor comforters viewed Job's afflictions only in the light of chastisements, failing utterly to comprehend the divine purpose, and this only added stings to his afflictions; but through them all the Lord brought his servant and most fully vindicated him in the eyes of all the people.

Thus will he ever do with all who patiently maintain their integrity and trust in God under affliction. If any man recognize affliction as a chastisement of the Lord for the correction of some evil way in him, let him be quick to learn the lesson and repent; or if it be refining discipline, let patience under the tedious process have its perfect work.

The Apostle Paul (Heb. 11) calls up a long list of patient, faithful ones who endured cruel **[R1721 : page 334]** mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment, who were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. All this they endured patiently for righteousness' sake, looking by faith to God for the reward of their patience and faithfulness in his own good time. Then again, says the Apostle (Heb. 12:3), "Consider him [Christ] that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Yea, consider him, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." He left us an example that we should follow his steps.

While we see the great necessity for pruning, cultivating and discipline in the development of character, it is manifest that none will

be able to endure it unto the desirable end of final establishment in righteousness who do not from the beginning diligently devote themselves to the exercise of patience. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "In your patience possess ye your souls."
