

PATIENCE AS AN ELEMENT OF CHARACTER.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth."

– Rev. 3:10.

WE WILL not here discuss this verse from the standpoint of its application to the Philadelphia epoch of the Church's history, but will content ourselves with examining the principles implied in its statement, believing, as we do, that the Lord's dealings with his Church throughout this Gospel age follow the same lines, are in harmony with the same principles. Whatever condition, therefore, would be acceptable and pleasing to the Lord as respected the Philadelphia epoch of the Church's history would be acceptable and pleasing to him in respect to ourselves and all others of his people during this age.

Special stress, we see, is laid upon patience – "the word of my patience," or, the patience which my word inculcates. Examining the word critically we find that two quite distinct words in the Greek are translated by our English word patience in the New Testament; the one is *makrothunia* (Heb. 6:12; James 5:10; Acts 26:3): this is the word which in a general way corresponds to the common thought of patience, as we speak of it connected with every-day affairs of our lives; it means merely long-suffering, and, indeed, *makrothunia* is generally so translated throughout the New Testament. (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:15, [R2791 : page 115] etc.) But this is not the word used in our text, nor the word generally translated *patience* throughout the New Testament, *viz., hupomonee*.

This word, *hupomonee*, has a much deeper and fuller significance than attaches to our English word patience. It signifies rather *constancy*, – the thought being an endurance of evil in a cheerful, willing, patient manner. It represents, therefore, *an element of character*, and not merely a temporary condition or restraint of feeling or action. For instance, a worldly man might have a great deal of patience in connection with the prosecution of his business; – he might be very attentive to his customers, very obliging, very painstaking, and show no dissatisfaction in connection with the inconsiderateness of his customers; and "*patience*," in its ordinary sense, might be ascribed to his conduct. But the word in our text rendered *patience* signifies such a development of heart and character as manifests itself in an endurance of wrong or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the divine wisdom and love, which, while permitting present evils, has promised to overthrow them in God's due time. We believe it will be profitable for us to examine carefully this element of Christian character, of which our Lord speaks in such high commendation, that recognizing it clearly, we, as his followers, may attain to it more completely, and thus have his more abundant approval.

Since our text mentions this patient endurance as being the Lord's "word" or teaching, let us glance backward to the Gospel narrative, and note the Lord's use of the word in his teaching. Twice it is recorded as a part of his utterance. In Luke 8:15, in the parable of the sower, we read: "That [sown] on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with *patience* [with cheerful endurance, constancy]." The thought here is that in order to be of the fruit-bearing class which the Lord will approve and accept to his Kingdom, it is necessary to do more than to receive the word of his testimony, even tho we receive it with joy – for that class in the parable is represented by the stony

ground, which at first gave [R2791 : page 116] evidence of great fruitfulness and vigor, but which, when the sun of persecution arose, withered, because of lack of depth of soil. That stony, shallow soil represents, the Lord explains, a class of hearers who rejoice greatly in the truth, but do not *endure*, such as cannot withstand persecution or opposition, but wither under it, become discouraged. Such cannot be of the Kingdom class, all of whom must be overcomers.

In this parable our Lord shows us that *patient endurance, constancy*, is the final test, following after the readiness of preparation to receive the seed; following after the seed has been received and has sprouted; following after love and hope and joy and faith have caused it to spring forth and to give fruitage. *Patient endurance*, then, is necessary, in order that the grain may be developed and thoroughly ripened, and made fit for the garner. Ah! how important *patient endurance* seems to be, in the light of this our Lord's word – cheerful endurance; for we cannot suppose that he who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart would be pleased with his children, even if he saw them *enduring* much for his sake, if they endured in an impatient or dissatisfied or unhappy frame of mind. They would not, in that event, be copies of God's dear Son, our Lord, whose sentiment is expressed in the words, "I *delight* to do thy will, O God!" All of the Royal Priesthood are sacrificers, as was the Chief Priest, our Redeemer and example, who offered up himself: we, as the under priests, have also presented our bodies living sacrifices, and are to lay down our lives for the brethren – in the service of the truth. And God, who accepts these sacrifices through the merit of Christ, informs us that he appreciates or loves the *cheerful* giver, those who perform their sacrifices of a willing heart, cheerfully. And this thought, be it noted, is in the Greek word we are considering. It is cheerful endurance, patient endurance, that is commended.

The other instance in which our Lord used the word during his ministry is recorded in Luke 21:19. He had just been telling his followers what they must expect as the result of being his disciples during the present time, when sin abounds, and when Satan is the prince of this world – they must expect tribulation, opposition from various quarters; but he assures them that they would nevertheless be fully and completely under divine care and protection, even tho the persecutions would be permitted to reach and to affect them. Then follow the words, "In your patience [*patient endurance, cheerful constancy*] possess ye your souls."

Our faith and trust in the Lord and his gracious promises for the future life are to be so strong that they will more than counter-balance the oppositions of the world, of false brethren, and of Satan's blinded servants; – so much so that these persecutions will be recognized and rejoiced in as the agencies of divine providence in chiseling, shaping and polishing us as the living stones for the glorious Temple which God is constructing. And viewing our trials from this standpoint we can indeed possess our souls, our lives, and enjoy them, even amidst tribulation, with *cheerful endurance*, constancy. Yea, we may realize that the soul, the real being, to which God has given the exceeding great and precious promises of the future, cannot be injured by the persecutions of the flesh, nor by anything that men can do to us, so long as we are faithful to the Lord, accepting the persecutions with cheerful constancy, as the ministrations permitted of his providence for our ultimate good.

THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE.

Here the question properly arises, Why is this so? In what sense is such endurance necessary? We answer that it is one of the conditions which God has attached to the call to joint-heirship in the Kingdom, and the wisdom of this is manifest

when we consider the work to which we are called – the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as God's Millennial Kingdom, under and in joint-heirship with our Lord. That will be a great work, and it is eminently proper that the Lord should demand that those whom he would account worthy of it shall not only appreciate his goodness and his character, and prefer these to sin and iniquity, but that they should demonstrate their thorough loyalty to these principles to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of right, to endure patiently. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the person to have established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful endurance even unto death, would prove and demonstrate such a character.

We might illustrate this with the diamond. Suppose that we were able to make diamonds out of some plastic material, so that they would have the full diamond measure of brilliancy; and suppose that they became hard, but not so intensely hard as the diamond, would they have the value of the diamond? By no means. And so with the Christian; if we should suppose him possessed of every grace of character that could possibly belong to the sons of God except this one of firmness, of endurance, he would not be fit to be numbered amongst the Lord's jewels. Hence the Lord's demand is that the quality of firmness, cheerful endurance of whatever his providence may permit, shall be a characteristic of all those who will be fit for the Kingdom.

This importance of endurance in the Christian **[R2791 : page 117]** character is fully borne out by the Apostle Paul's use of the word; for on more than one occasion he ranks it as above and beyond Love, which we have seen is the "mark" of character for which we are to run, – the mark of the prize. For instance, in writing to Titus (2:2), enumerating the characteristics of the advanced Christian, the Apostle uses the following order: "Vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity [love],

in *patience* [patient, cheerful endurance]." Tho we have all the other qualities, this final test of patient, cheerful endurance must be passed before we could be accepted of the Lord as members of the "very elect."

Again, in writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10) respecting himself, the Apostle again puts this quality of *patient endurance* in the place beyond Love saying, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, *patient endurance*."

It may be asked, How can this quality rank higher than love, if love is the fulfilling of the Law, and the mark of the prize of our high calling? We reply, that patient endurance does not merely come in at the close of our race, but is requisite all the way along the race course. We need this cheerful endurance of the earliest trials in the Christian way, and as we speed along in our race for the mark the spirit of cheerful endurance should be growing stronger and stronger at every step of the journey. It is with us at the first quarter mark, and at the second quarter mark, and at the third quarter mark, and still with us at the fourth quarter mark, the mark of the prize, perfect love. And when we have reached this mark of the race in which we love not only our friends, but our enemies, it is required of us that we shall stand up to the mark faithfully, cheerfully, *patiently enduring* the tests which the Lord will even then see proper to let come upon us. Hence it is that the Apostle exhorts us, "Having done all, *stand*" – *endure*. Having reached the "mark," "Let *patient endurance* have her perfect work," or "perfect her work." Let *patient endurance* demonstrate, not only that you have the character, the qualifications of love, demanded in the race for the prize, but also that you have it as an element of character, deep-rooted, immutable, so that [R2792 : page 117] you can endure oppositions cheerfully.

Ah yes! we can see now a reason for the Lord's arrangement that we should have our trial as the Master had his, under an evil environment – that we might not only have the qualities of character, but have them rooted, grounded, established, and that all this should be demonstrated and proven by our *cheerful endurance* of whatever divine providence shall see best to permit to befall us.

INSPIRED APPLICATIONS OF PATIENT- ENDURANCE.

Everything that will enable us to see the importance of this quality of patient, cheerful *endurance* will be helpful to us. Therefore let us notice some other instances in which this word is used in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul says, "But ye have need of *patience* [cheerful endurance, constancy] that *after* ye have done the will of God [reached the mark] ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36.) Here, again, we see that it is not merely to do the will of God that is the test, but, that after having attained to that point, that mark of character in our hearts, in our wills (if only partially in the flesh) we should, by *patient endurance*, establish God's righteous will as the law of our hearts, the rule of life under all circumstances and conditions. Then, and not till then, will we be in the heart condition of fitness for the Kingdom. The Apostle James (1:3) says: "The trying of your faith worketh *patience [patient endurance];*" that is to say, if our faith stands the trial it will work this character of patient endurance; of course, on the other hand, if we do not attain to patient endurance, it will mean that our faith has not stood the test satisfactorily, that we are not fit for the Kingdom.

Thus we see clearly that a great mistake has been made amongst Christian people in general in supposing that religion is merely *a thing* that is to be gotten as an answer to prayer, or by

going to a mourners' bench, or standing up for prayer, or in response to some human or divine appeal – as one would get a dollar and put it into his pocket. On the contrary, repentance of sin and acceptance of Christ, in faith unto justification, is only the beginning and not the end of the Christian way. The next step is consecration, and this also, is far from the end; it is merely starting in the school of Christ, having our names enrolled as those who desire to be pupils, and to be taught of God to cultivate the fruits and graces of the spirit. All these things are necessary, but much more is necessary; we must go on and on, not only to the attainment of the faith and the love, but also to the demonstration of character as expressed in his word, *patient endurance*.

The Apostle Paul exhorts, "Let us run with patience [cheerful constancy, patient endurance] the race set before us in the Gospel." (Heb. 12:1.) As already observed, the race must be run with this constancy if we would reach the "mark," and after reaching the mark the position can only be maintained by the grace of constancy, patient endurance, that having done all, we may stand.

THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION ABOUT TO COME UPON THE WHOLE WORLD.

We are not to understand our Lord's words to mean that he kept those of his people designated as **[R2792 : page 118]** the Church at Philadelphia from all trials and temptations: quite to the contrary, we may be sure that trials and temptations have been the portion of the Lord's people throughout the entire age. As the Apostle Peter said to some in his day, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which shall try you, as tho some strange [new] thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 4:12.) Trials must be the portion of all who would be "overcomers." How else could they overcome if they had no trials to overcome? The

Church represented as belonging to the Philadelphia period had these common or general trials; but the Lord proposed to spare them from certain special trials that were about to come upon the whole world. We are not of the Philadelphia epoch, but of the Laodicean epoch, which goes into these trials, and to our understanding this "hour of temptation," which is to try all people of the world, is already here, we are already in it, and it forms part of the testing of our endurance.

But tho our Lord does not preserve the Laodicean stage of his saints from going into the trouble, we may be sure that those who *keep the word of his patience* now will have his keeping power, as promised to the Laodicean saints: "I stand at the door and knock; whoever hears my voice and opens to me I will come in and sup with him and he with me." This is the special reward of those who are running the race with *patient endurance* in the present time, in the Laodicean period; while it was not our privilege to escape the hour of temptation, it is our privilege to have a counter-balancing special blessing as a result of living in the time of our Lord's *parousia* (presence). We may have his fellowship, his instruction, his dispensing of spiritual food which is now "meat in due season," in a manner and to a degree which none of the faithful of past periods enjoyed these. But as we might expect, this greatest favor is correspondingly offset by the subtilty and severity of the trials of this hour of temptation coming upon the whole world.

If ever *patient endurance* was necessary it is necessary now; if ever it was true, "In patience possess ye your souls," it is so now. Those running the race acceptably, and possessing this *patient endurance*, will be able "to stand in this evil day," and no others will be able to stand; for, as the Apostle says, the fiery trials of this day shall try every man's work of what sort it is. – 1 Cor. 3:13.

The hour of temptation seems to bear specially upon and test this point of *patient endurance*, and throughout the civilized world we find this quality of *patient endurance* becoming more and more scarce. Whether we can compare conditions of today with those of fifty years ago, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or ten years ago, according to our experience in the matter, we will see that willingness to endure at all is growing more and more scarce. Nobody wishes to endure anything – for righteousness' sake, for Christ's sake or for anybody else's sake, and if endurance even be necessary it is generally with very much of impatience, very much more of complaint, etc., than formerly. And this general tendency of the civilized world to non-endurance and impatience, necessarily has its bearing and influence upon all who are seeking to walk in the narrow way, going against the current of public sentiment and custom; the stronger that current the greater their difficulty, and only by divine grace can progress be made.

This necessary divine grace is granted to us through a knowledge of the divine plan, and is withheld from those who are not walking close to the Lord in the footsteps of Jesus. It is for this reason that we see a growing disposition toward impatience, non-endurance, amongst the professed followers of Christ. It is at the bottom of the mob violence which in Europe is kept down by military force, but which in this country is manifesting itself in repeated instances of lynching, etc., which proclaims with loud voice *impatience* as the growing sentiment. The same wrong condition is illustrated in the recently inaugurated attack upon illegal liquor selling in the State of Kansas, in which those who love righteousness and hate iniquity have participated, not discerning the instructions of the Lord's Word respecting *patient endurance* of evil, until his time shall come for the rectification of the same; – by the establishment of the Kingdom, the binding of Satan, and the subjugation of all evil.

Indeed, we may expect the growth of this spirit in Christendom – the feeling that in the past they have been too patient, not sufficiently aggressive – the feeling that if they had taken matters into their own hands long ago the world might have been converted ere this. But those who have kept the Lord's word of *patient endurance*, and who have sought from him the needed wisdom from on high, that is first pure, then peaceable, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and good works, and *patient endurance*, have learned that he has a due time in which his purposes shall all be accomplished; and learning this has assisted them in cultivating *patient endurance* as their Lord endured the opposition of evil, its malignity, its spite, its falsehoods, its persecution – enduring all this cheerfully, patiently, as unto the Lord – realizing that it is the program which the Lord has not only permitted, but permitted for wise purposes in connection with the call and preparation of the "little flock" who shall be joint-heirs with Christ, their Lord, in the Kingdom. [R2792 : page 119]

The Apostle counsels us respecting this hour of temptation into which we have just entered. Its besetments and trials will be various, and some of them will be subtle; so deceptive that all who are not thoroughly rooted and grounded in the truth will be carried away from the sure foundation (the ransom) by the false arguments and sophistries of those whom Satan is now permitted to use as his agents in trying all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Amongst these, no testing seems much more subtle than that of Christian Science, which, backed by the Adversary's power, is enabled to promise its perverts that if they will affirm an untruth and stick to it they shall have the reward of relief from certain pains and ailments, and those who have not learned to patiently *endure* whatever the Lord's providence shall permit, will be ready to accept almost any relief which the Adversary may bring to their attention. And as they learn to *deceive themselves* in respect to pain and sickness [R2793 :

page 119] and gradually to pervert words from their real meaning, they finally become so confused in their minds that truth appears to them to be falsehood, and falsehood appears to them to be shining truth, on every subject involved.

They are led into this partly through curiosity. It seems so strange to hear anyone say, "There is no death, all is life! there is no pain, all is health! there is no evil, all is good!" They say to themselves, Altho we know that these are inconsistent statements yet we are curious to know how people reason them out, – what is their philosophy? This is just what the Adversary desires – to attract their attention, that step by step he may then lead them from one falsity to another, until the whole brain and conscience are subverted; rewarding them with physical relief – small recompense! They have accepted darkness for light, and light thereafter will appear to them darkness. Why? How? Because, first, they are unwilling to *patiently endure*, and because, secondly, they would not receive the truth, so far as they saw it, with a proper *constancy*. They would not receive the truth in the love of it, and hence were ready to exchange that which they valued too lightly, either in the quest of curious information, or for the sake of physical healing of troubles which, if endured joyfully, might have worked for them great blessing.

The hour of trial is not coming alike upon all; for all Christendom is not upon the same plane of development, mental, moral, physical, spiritual. The trial, as it is coming upon Christendom in general, is pictured by the Apostle in his letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:1-5). He here delineates certain characteristics of this hour of temptation, otherwise called the great "time of trouble" coming upon the world; and from his prophetic delineation we see that selfishness will be at the bottom of the matter, and that *impatience* will be its weapon. The Apostle says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; men shall be lovers of their own selves;

covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers [enticers to strife], incontinent [not under restraint, impetuous], fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors [cannot be trusted, would sell out their best friends for selfish considerations], heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, *having a form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof."

In his letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:9-12) the Apostle gives some further intimations respecting the peculiar trials of this hour of temptations, which has come upon the whole world, but which has not yet reached its intensity, and which probably will not reach that intensity in all respects for some years, but which is already working, and sifting, separating, – because the judgment begins with the house of God. He says, speaking of Satan as the prime mover in the evils of this present time, and especially active in this hour of temptation with which this age shall close, that his effort will be "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Then he explains to us the reason why it will be so, saying, "Because they received not *the truth* in the *love of it*, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

God's promise is the foundation upon which all that we hope for, either of character or coming glory, is built. Let us prize this truth so that we will not compromise it in any sense or in any degree; let us not only hold the truth in the letter but in the spirit; – in the love of it, because it is true, as well as because it is beautiful and grand. Holding it thus we will be careful that no one shall twist it for us or pervert it, and equally careful that we do not handle the word of God deceitfully ourselves, to the

blinding of our own eyes of understanding, and thus to our own hindrance. And let us ever remember the importance of *patient endurance*, that we may not only cultivate the Christian graces, and practise them, but that we may take joyfully the trials, persecutions or difficulties which our Lord may see proper to permit to come upon us for our testing and for the development of this character which he explains to us is of paramount importance, and without which perfect love could neither be attained nor maintained. [R2793 : page 120]

SPECIAL TRIALS OF THE PASSOVER SEASON.

Years ago we called attention to the fact that as the Passover season brought to our dear Lord the sorrows and trials of Gethsemane and Calvary, and was a time of sifting and testing for Judas and Peter and all the Lord's followers, it would appear to be a time even yet in which our Adversary, Satan, is granted special license to test and prove the Lord's people. And as we get farther and farther into "the hour of temptation which shall try all them that dwell upon the earth," we expect these testings to be specially upon "the house of God" – the consecrated.

Through the mails we learn of the struggles and tears and prayers of many, – some because of their own weaknesses and frailties, and some because of the frailties of others, and some because of earthly burdens which they can neither overcome nor cast fully upon the Lord. But while sympathizing with these and counselling them as best we can, we remember the Master's words, "Blessed are those who weep now, for they shall rejoice," and our heart is specially solicitous for those whose letters give evidence that they are in temptation, but realize it not; – those who are being swallowed up of ambition or business or other "cares of this life and deceitfulness of riches" – spiritual or temporal; and with those specially, whose love for the truth seems to grow cooler instead of hotter each year, and who see

less and feel less than they did years ago. We say to ourself, these are like the apostles, – sleeping while they should be watching and praying, and the hour of trial will find them unprepared; while some who are weeping and striving are more like our Savior at Gethsemane, and like him will be *strengthened* for the hour of trial.

Nor can we pray the Lord not to permit these trials of faith and patient endurance; for we recognize that the "very elect" must be a tried people, because of the very object of their election, – that they may be joint-heirs with Christ in the long-promised Kingdom that is to judge and bless the world during the Millennium. As the Apostle says, these "fiery trials *must* try you." It is a matter of *must*, of necessity, as respects all who would be graduated from the present school of Christ to a share in his glorious Kingdom, – that they must pass the examination.

Ah, if we could but keep this thought before us continually, how it would nerve us to will and to do the Lord's good pleasure – enduring faithfully and cheerfully whatever our loving Master sees best to permit, *knowing* that thus he is working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. From this standpoint

"How light our trials then will seem!
How short our pilgrim way!
The life of earth a fitful dream,
Dispelled by dawning day!

"Then peace, my heart! and hush my tongue!
Be calm, my troubled breast!
Each passing hour prepares thee more
For everlasting rest."

Let us each, dear brethren, be very solicitous for ourselves and for each other; and counting the prize set before us in the

gospel as superior to all else, as the Apostle says, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Let us so love all the Lord's children that their welfare will be our chief concern, and this will mean our own spiritual health. Yet we must not permit our love even for the brethren to hinder our confidence in the Lord's love and wisdom in respect to his terms in the choice of his Bride; – even tho the siftings should take from us some, whose fellowship we dearly cherish.

"Why should an anxious load
Press down thy weary mind?
Haste to thy Heavenly Father's throne
And sweet refreshment find."

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"SO AS BY FIRE."

"I sometimes feel so passionate a yearning
For spiritual perfection here below,
This vigorous frame with healthful fervor burning,
Seems my determined foe.

"So actively it makes a stern resistance,
So cruelly it sometimes wages war
Against the higher spiritual existence,
Which I am striving for.

"It interrupts my soul's intense devotions;
Some hope it strangles at its very birth
With a swift rush of violent emotions
Which link me to the earth.

"It is as if two mortal foes contended

Within my bosom in a deadly strife;
One for the loftier aims Jesus intended,
One for the "Mammon" life.

"And yet I know this very war within me,
Which brings out all my will-power and control;
This very conflict yet through Christ shall win me
The loved and longed-for goal.

"And when in the immortal ranks enlisted,
Sometimes I wonder if we shall not find
That not for deeds alone, but also what's resisted,
Our places were assigned."
– *Selected.*
