

PATIENCE A CARDINAL GRACE OF CHARACTER

"Ye have need of patience [cheerful endurance], that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the [fulfilment of] the promise. – Heb. 10:36.

THE Apostle is addressing the Christian Church – You who have left the world, who have accepted Christ as your Standard-bearer, as well as your Redeemer, and who are seeking to walk in His steps, and have made consecration of your life to the Lord – "Ye have need of patience." To a certain extent you did the will of God when you made your consecration to be dead with Christ. But that will of God was more deeply impressed upon you when you began to realize more than at first what this sacrifice would mean, and that only those who suffer with Christ shall reign with Him.

"After you were illuminated" you saw the matter clearly, and "endured a great fight of afflictions." This was well. But St. Paul goes on to show in the context that some, after having demonstrated their zeal for a certain time, become cold. They become weary in well doing. And he tells us that these thus cut themselves off from the favors, privileges and blessings belonging to the Church of Christ. His exhortation is that those who are still loyal to God at heart continue so and exercise *patience*, remembering that this is one of the cardinal graces of Christian character. Many have naturally a little love, a little gentleness, a little patience, a little meekness, etc. But after we begin to grow in the graces of the Holy [R5332 : page 313] Spirit, we need *patience* to control the flesh, the spirit of the world, the spirit of selfishness.

The will of God is in one sense of the word the standard of God – full perfection – that we should be like our Father which is in Heaven. But God remembers that we are fallen creatures, and that we cannot do perfectly. Our text does not mean that we must do the

will of God in the perfect and complete sense; but rather, as the Apostle elsewhere says, ours is a *reasonable service*. When we present our bodies living sacrifices to God, it is our reasonable service. God does not expect us to do that which is impossible.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR TESTING

What is this will of God? Stated in concrete form, "This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification." (I Thess. 4:3.) As the Apostle teaches, consecration is a full and complete setting apart. If we do such a setting of *ourselves* apart at the beginning, then the *Father* sanctifies us – begets us as New Creatures, and sets us apart. So we have, first of all, our setting of ourselves apart; and then God's acceptance by our begetting of the Holy Spirit as New Creatures, and His continued work in us.

We are doing the will of God when we fully consecrate ourselves to Him, and attain a place in the New Creation. But He wills to put us to the test. How much do we love God? How sincere are we? A soldier in an army might be loyal in time of quiet, but how would he be in time of stress? Would he desert the flag then, or would he prove himself a good soldier? He would need a great deal of patience. If he says he loves his country, his endurance and faithfulness will be tested in her time of need. He must go on picket duty; he must sometimes do menial work. He must endure wearisome marches, and many privations. All these things are required of a faithful soldier. If he is faithful, he is likely to be promoted, honored, for his faithful service.

So we are tested as to our *loyalty*. What are we willing to *endure* for Christ's sake? How *fully* are we submitted? How *deep* does our submission go? Are we wholly in harmony with the will of the Lord? Is our interest merely superficial, or does it enter fully into our hearts? The question is not merely, Shall we make the consecration? – but after the Christian has taken all of

these preliminary steps, to what extent will he manifest patient endurance and obedience and loyalty?

God puts us to these tests because He has great honors to bestow on those who will be overcomers. They are to be a select company, and these will receive the Promise. As the Apostle says, it is after we have *proved* our loyalty to the very last, that we shall receive the Promise; i.e., its fulfilment.

THE ESSENCE OF THE PROMISE

When, where, what is the Promise? Undoubtedly the promise will be received in the resurrection. The promise includes all that God has in reservation for them that love Him – that love Him more than they love houses and lands, or children, or parents, or friends, or husbands or wives, or self, or any other thing.

The particular promise that the Apostle refers to here is *The* Promise. All our hopes and blessings are centered in the original Promise made to Abraham, when God brought him out of the land of Chaldea into the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that in His Seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. That has been the great Promise for encouragement to the Seed, to give them patience and fortitude. This is the essence of the Promise – that those who receive the Promise shall be the Seed of Abraham to bless the world. The faithful in Christ will be associated with Him in His Kingdom – will have the honor of blessing all the families of the earth under this Kingdom. Every creature of God shall then be brought to a knowledge of His Truth, and shall have the opportunity of being restored, if he will, to perfection, to all that was redeemed on Calvary.

Now the opportunity is *different*. *Now* the selection is being made of those who will inherit the Promise as the Seed of Abraham. "If ye be *Christ's*, then are ye *Abraham's Seed*, and heirs according to the Promise." The Apostle is in our text urging that we continue

to be Christ's and to abide in Him. All those who thus remain in Him to the end will be glorified with Him. In order to remain faithful, we must have His spirit of devotion.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES OF PATIENT ENDURANCE

St. James exhorts the Church saying, "Take, my brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." Those whom the Apostle addressed already knew of the sufferings of Jesus. They already knew of the faithfulness of the Apostles. And now he was calling the attention of their minds to something *additional*. He is urging, Look back into the past, and see that patient endurance has been characteristic of all who have lived holy lives. These examples should be lessons of encouragement to us, in addition to those we have in the living brethren around us!

Then there is always something to be gained in casting the mind backward. The things close at hand are too near to be seen in their proper light. It was fitting that the Apostle should call attention to those faithful ones of the past, so that we might be encouraged to note what God desires. In those who are His, He desires a willingness to endure patiently and loyally, thus manifesting true character, that which greatly pleases Him.

As we look back over the Old Testament record of the Prophets, we notice that many of them displayed this very quality referred to by the Apostle as loyalty to the Lord, a willingness to suffer afflictions for *His sake*, and not as experiences brought through chance upon them by the people. We see Moses – how willing he was to suffer **[R5333 : page 313]** affliction because of his faith in the Promise made to Abraham and his conviction that the Promise would come true. He preferred to suffer with the people of God rather than to live at ease in the royal family of Pharaoh, into which he had been adopted.

We see in Job another example of patient endurance of tribulation and of strong opposition for a considerable time. We see the same in Jeremiah – how much his faithfulness cost him of hardship, and how patient he was. We see the same in Daniel the Prophet – his faithfulness to the Lord, his patient endurance of whatever God permitted to come against him. And so with others of the Prophets. And we read that their experiences were written for *our* admonition, *our* instruction. Although they belong to one Dispensation and we to another, yet their experiences furnish us good lessons. – I Cor. 10:6,11.

PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THESE LESSONS

Applying these lessons to ourselves, we may say that to whatever extent we may be privileged to speak the Word of God and to suffer persecution therefore, if we take it with patience, it will bring us a corresponding blessing and commendation from the Lord. But we cannot think it would be pleasing to Him if, when we suffer, we think, Oh, how terrible, terrible, terrible! Such an attitude would not be taking His Word for it, that "*All* that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution," [R5333 : page 314] and that all things shall work out for our good. – 2 Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:28.

When Job was rich, prosperous, God tested him by taking from him all his family, all his wealth, his health, and even allowing his wife to turn against him. Yet in all this Job did not turn against God. He did indeed express wonder, but he looked to the Lord in faith and said, "Though worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." I shall yet receive the manifestation of His favor, and learn what He means by these experiences, these afflictions, coming upon me. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." – Job 13:15.

After his testings had been accomplished, God gave him back children, houses, lands, friends. And these coming in abundance shadowed forth the blessings of Restitution – how the tribulations of mankind will eventually work out for good to those who will love

God. If those who are now suffering affliction because of their loyalty to the Lord, because of their trust in His arrangements, will take afflictions and trials joyfully, these will surely work out good to them – "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

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