

PATIENT ENDURANCE THE FINAL TEST

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

THE Scriptures everywhere represent patience as an important element of character. In every phase of human experience we can see its need. To be just under present conditions, one must be patient, not rash; for it would be unjust to be impatient and severe with the unavoidable imperfections and weaknesses of our fellowmen. Therefore the spirit of a sound mind demands that we be patient in dealing with fallen humanity. God Himself possesses this quality of patience, and has long exercised it. In dealing with the world in the next Age the Church will need to have much patience, and under our present environments we need it constantly in order to develop the character necessary for a place on the Throne with our Lord.

Patience is closely allied to love and mercy. If God were unloving, unmerciful, He would be without patience. In man's present blemished, fallen condition, patience is sadly lacking, although it is often exercised outwardly for policy's sake. This Godlike quality, like all the other qualities of character inherent in God and in all perfect beings created in His likeness, has been largely obliterated in humanity by the fall of the first pair.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated *patience*. One of these words signifies forbearance, longsuffering. The other carries the thought of cheerful or hopeful endurance. The latter is the word used in our text, and has a much deeper significance than attaches ordinarily to our word patience. This constancy – *the endurance of evil in a cheerful, willing manner* – represents an element of character, and not merely a temporary restraint of feeling or of action. It signifies a

development of heart and character which manifests itself in an endurance of wrong or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the requirement of Divine Wisdom and Love, which, while permitting present evils, has promised in due time to overthrow them.

It will surely be profitable for us to cultivate carefully this element of Christian character of which our Lord speaks in such high commendation, and without which, His Word assures us, our character cannot be perfected. The Christian requires patient endurance to put on the whole armor of God, and having put it on, to keep it securely buckled. We need it in dealing not only with others, but also with ourselves, with our own blemishes. We should always take into account the various circumstances and conditions surrounding ourselves and others. As we look around, we see that the world is in a condition of blight, of sin. This knowledge should give us great sympathy with humanity, without which we would have but little patience. All of our brethren in Christ, like ourselves, are by nature members of this fallen human race. Therefore we should have a great deal of patient endurance with the Lord's people, as we would have them exercise this grace toward us.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

As the quality of justice will always persist, so will the quality of patience, though not in the sense of patient endurance of evil. God patiently works out His own glorious designs, in perfect equipoise of mind. At present this requires the exercise of patient endurance with evil, sinful conditions; and in the Ages of glory to come God will, we believe, still work out His purposes in perfect patience, probably in worlds yet uninhabited.

But in the exercise of patience under present evil conditions, Wisdom must have a voice. God has declared that in His Wisdom the time will come when He will cease to exercise patience toward the world. That is to say, He will no longer bear with the world in

their present sinful, imperfect condition. That time has almost arrived. The great cataclysm of trouble, now about due, will sweep away the entire present order preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens. Then God will give men the fullest opportunity of coming into harmony with Himself and righteousness before He will deal with them summarily.

The time is coming when there will be no more sin. God will have a clean universe by and by. But He will first give everybody an opportunity to rise out of sin. If they will not avail themselves of the opportunity, then God's patience, longsuffering, will cease to be operative toward such. This will not mean that God's patience has ceased, but that its activity has ceased in that direction.

God's patience has arranged the thousand years of Messiah's Reign for man's blessing, and His Wisdom has decided that those thousand years will be sufficient for the elimination of evil. Whoever will not learn to live righteously under those favorable conditions would never learn, and it would not be the part of Divine Wisdom longer to exercise patience with such. Likewise also, in **[R5650 : page 84]** our dealings with ourselves and others, there is a limit to the proper exercise of patience – longsuffering. We should not be patient with ourselves beyond a certain point. There are circumstances in which we would properly feel that we should have *known* better and should have *done* better than we did.

LET US JUDGE OURSELVES

If a child of God realizes that he has been derelict with himself, he should say, I will not be patient with myself any further. I will take myself in hand and conquer this weakness which I have permitted in a measure to assert itself to the weakening of my own character and probably to the discomfort and pain of others. I cannot do this in my own unaided strength, but by the grace of the Lord I am determined to overcome in this matter.

Parents require much patience, forbearance, in dealing with their children. The limit of patience might differ in regard to different children. Therefore the wise parent will judge how nearly each child has been doing the right thing, and how well each has received and profited by instruction. If he finds that any child of his is wilfully doing wrong, he should not continue to be patient, but should administer the rod. This would not mean that the parent had ceased to be patient. He might have patience the next day with the same child, and subsequently the application of the rod might come again. We are rather to be too patient, too sympathetic, than to have too little patience, too little sympathy. Remembering our own weaknesses, we are to exercise patience toward others who are seeking to overcome their imperfections, even as we are seeking to overcome our own. We all need that patience, forbearance, be exercised toward us.

OUR LORD'S LESSONS ON PATIENT ENDURANCE

Recurring to the word patience as used in our text, let us glance backward to our Lord's Parable of the Sower, as recorded in Luke 8. In verse 15 we read, "That 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," patient endurance, constancy. The thought here is that to be of the fruit-bearing class which the Lord will approve and accept in His Kingdom we must do more than to receive the Word of His Testimony, even though we receive it with joy. It means more; for the stony ground class at first thus received it. For a brief time these seemed to give evidence of fruitfulness and vigor; but when the hot sun of persecution arose, they withered away, because of lack of depth of soil.

In this parable the Lord shows that patient endurance, constancy, is the final test of character. It follows after the receiving and the sprouting of the seed; it follows after love, hope, joy and faith have caused the seed to spring forth and begin to bear

fruit. Patient endurance, then, is necessary in order that the fruit may be developed and thoroughly ripened, that the grain may be made ready for the garner. Ah, how important this grace is seen to be, in the light of God's Word! But remember that the endurance must be *cheerful*. We cannot suppose that He who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart would be pleased with His children, even when He saw them bearing much for His sake, if they endured it in an impatient or dissatisfied or unhappy frame of mind.

Those who thus endure surely would not be copies of God's dear Son, whose sentiment found expression in the words, "I *delight* to do Thy will, O My God!" All of the Royal Priesthood are sacrificers, as was our great Chief Priest; and God who accepts our sacrifices through the merit of our dear Redeemer, informs us that He loves a *cheerful* giver – one who performs his sacrifices gladly, with a willing heart. This does not mean that our bodies will never grow weary; but that our spirit will rejoice in the privilege of suffering weariness of the flesh in so noble and wonderful a service. But if our Father should see best to lay us aside from active work for a time, when our hearts are longing to serve, this too will be an opportunity to endure cheerfully His will for us. It may also be a test of our full submission of our wills to His, and thus be an important stepping-stone upward toward the Kingdom glories and privileges.

The other instance in which the Lord used this word patience, or patient endurance, is recorded in Luke 21:19. He had just been telling His followers that they must expect tribulations as the result of being His disciples during the present time, when sin abounds, when Satan is the prince of this world. They must expect opposition from various quarters; but He assured them that nevertheless **[R5651 : page 84]** they would be fully under Divine care and protection, even though 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." – Luke 21:19.

Our faith and our trust in the Lord and His gracious promises should be so strong and unwavering that they will far more than counterbalance the oppositions of the world, of false brethren, and of Satan's blinded servants. So implicit should be our faith in our Father's love and care that all these persecutions will be recognized and rejoiced in as the agencies of His providence in chiseling, shaping and polishing us as living stones for the glorious Temple which He is constructing, and which is now so soon, we believe, to be set up.

Viewing our trials from this standpoint, we can indeed rejoice and can possess our souls, our lives, as New Creatures, even amidst tribulations, with cheerful endurance. Yea, we may realize that the soul, the real being, to whom God has given the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the future, cannot be injured by the persecutions of the flesh, or by anything that man can do unto us, so long as we are faithful to the Lord, accepting every experience that He permits to come to us as ministrations of His providence for our ultimate good and His glory.

THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE

Let us here examine carefully into the reason why it is necessary for us to develop this grace of patient endurance. It appears that the development of this quality is one of the conditions which God has attached to the call to joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom, and one of the same conditions required of Him. 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, in joint-heirship with the Only Begotten Son of God, our great Redeemer. That will be a mighty work; and it is eminently proper that Jehovah should require that those whom He shall account worthy of that exalted position shall

not only appreciate His goodness and His glorious character, and prefer His service to sin and iniquity, but demonstrate their thorough loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to His will to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of these principles. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the individual to have an established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful, endurance even unto death would be necessary to demonstrate such a character.

We might illustrate this with the diamond. Suppose [R5651 : page 85] that we were able to make diamonds out of some plastic material with the brilliancy of the real diamond; and suppose that they became hard, but not so hard as the genuine diamond. Would these imitation diamonds have the value of the true diamond? By no means. If they were subjected to severe pressure, they would be crushed. And so with the Christian. If we supposed him possessed of every grace of character that could belong to the sons of God, save this one of firmness, endurance, he would not be fit to be amongst the Lord's jewels. Hence we see the necessity of the Lord's demand that patient, cheerful endurance shall be a characteristic of each one who shall be accepted to a place in His Royal Diadem.

The importance of this quality in the Christian character is again emphasized by the Apostle Paul. In His Epistle to Titus (2:2), when enumerating the character-qualities of an advanced Christian, he declares that they must be "vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience." The final test of patient endurance must be passed before we can be accepted as of the Very Elect.

The same Apostle in writing to Timothy, thus reminds him, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patient endurance." We need this important grace more and more as we speed along on our race course and

near the end of the way. Feet grow weary; trials and testings abound; therefore we need to "gird up the loins of our mind" and, looking to our great Exemplar for the needed inspiration and strength, to set our faces like a flint for the home stretch.

TRIALS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

Our ability and strength to patiently endure should increase as we progress in the narrow way. We should grow "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." But we cannot possibly develop this essential trait of character without trials – experiences intended to call for the exercise of cheerful endurance. So let us not think it strange if we are called upon to pass through protracted trials which make necessary the nerving of ourselves to *bear*. But let us repeat that the virtue is not merely in the bearing; for the *world* has much to bear, but it is particularly in the *manner* in which we endure. At heart we must be sweet and submissive – in fullest harmony with the Lord's processes of development. This may be hard at times; but His grace will be sufficient, if we constantly apply for it. "Having done all," let us "stand!"

Ah, yes! We can see a new reason for the Lord's arrangement that we should have our trial as our Master had His – under an evil environment – that we might not only have all the necessary qualities of Christian character, but have them rooted, grounded, fixed, established.

The Apostle James likewise draws our attention to the importance of this quality. He says, "The trying of your faith worketh patience"; that is to say, if our faith stands the trial, it will work out in our character this patient endurance. On the other hand, if we do not attain this development, it will mean that our faith has not stood the test satisfactorily, and that we are not fit for the Kingdom. Thus we see clearly what a great mistake has been made among Christian people in general in supposing that religion is a thing to be gotten suddenly as an answer to prayer, or by going to

the mourner's bench, or by standing up for prayers, or in response to some Divine or human appeal – just as one would get a dollar and put it into his pocket. On the contrary, the step of repentance from sin and justification is only the beginning, and not the end, of the Christian way. The next step is consecration of ourselves and our all to God. But this also is far from the end. Not only must we go on and on, to the attainment of faith, fortitude, self-control, meekness and love, but having attained all these, we must *patiently endure*. We must "run with patience [cheerful endurance] the race set before us." Or, to use another figure of speech, it is merely starting in the School of Christ; merely having our names enrolled as pupils, to be taught of the Lord.

"THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION"

The Church of the Philadelphia period were promised of the Lord that because of their faithfulness, because they had "kept the Word of My patience," they should be kept from "the hour of temptation" which was to come upon all the world a little later. The Church of Laodicea – the Church of our day – is not kept from entering into the "hour of temptation"; but we may be sure that we will be kept while *in* it, if we are faithful and true. Our dear Lord's special message to the Laodicean phase of the Church has been, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne." – Revelation 3:20,21.

Though we are not spared from this hour of temptation, we have a counterbalancing blessing as a result of living in the time of our Lord's parousia.* We may have His instruction, His dispensing to us of spiritual food, "meat in due season," in a manner and to a degree never before enjoyed by His saints. And, as we might expect, this greatest favor is offset by the subtle and severe trials and testings of this special "hour of temptation." If there was ever

a time when patient endurance was needed by the Lord's faithful, it is *now*. If ever they needed the counsel, "In your *patience* possess ye your souls," they need it *now*. Those who are able to *patiently endure* will *stand* in this evil day. All others will fall. As the Apostle forewarned us, the fiery ordeals of this day "will try every man's work, of what sort it is."

*Any one interested in the Scriptural evidences that our Lord has now returned in the manner foretold, as "a thief in the night," will be sent the "Parousia" booklet, upon receipt of 6c in stamps with name and address. Direct request today to THE WATCH TOWER, Brooklyn, N.Y.

We find this quality of patient endurance lacking everywhere throughout Christendom today, even among the majority of the professed followers of Christ. It is becoming more and more scarce. Few wish to endure anything – for righteousness' sake, for Christ's sake, or for any one else's sake; and if endurance of anything unpleasant is absolutely necessary, the trial is borne with much of impatience, complaint and chafing. Moreover, a spirit of defiance and rebellion against everything like self-denial or resignation, a spirit of intense bitterness, is daily growing in the hearts of mankind.

This general tendency of the civilized world today toward non-endurance, impatience and rebellion against restraint necessarily has its influence upon those who are seeking to walk in the narrow way. Only by Divine grace can this tendency be successfully resisted, and progress be made toward the development of the likeness of Christ. This special grace, needed today by the Lord's children, will be withheld from those who are not walking close to the Lord, following in the footsteps of Jesus. It is because the professed followers of Christ are living so far from Him that we see today the tendencies are developing which we have noted amongst those who profess His name.

This spirit so prevalent is at the bottom of mob violence which is kept down largely by military force, in the outbreaks against law and order which we hear of so frequently. [R5652 : page 86] We may expect this spirit to continue to grow. There is a feeling amongst the masses that in the past they have been too patient, not sufficiently aggressive – the feeling that if they had taken things into their own hands long ago present conditions might have been averted. But those who have kept the Lord's Word of patient endurance, who have sought from Him the wisdom from on High, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and of good fruits," have learned that He has a due time in which His purposes shall be accomplished, and they are willing to abide His time patiently, knowing that it is best. They have learned that

"God's plans, like lilies white, unfold;
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,
Time will reveal the hidden heart of gold."

ONE OF SATAN'S SPECIAL DECEPTIONS

The Apostle counsels us respecting this "hour of temptation" which is now upon us. Its besetments and trials will be many, and some of them will be so subtle and deceptive that all who are not thoroughly rooted and grounded in the Truth will be carried away by the false arguments of those whom Satan is now permitted to use as his agents in trying all those who dwell upon the face of the whole earth.

Amongst these subtle theories of the Adversary, none seems more deceptive than Christian Science, falsely so called; for it is neither Christian nor scientific. Backed by the power of the Evil One, it is able to promise its dupes that if they will affirm an untruth, and *stick to it*, they shall have relief and cure of certain ailments and bodily afflictions. Those who have not learned to

endure patiently all that the Lord permits them to experience in the way of pain and sickness – all that cannot be relieved by rational and reasonable methods – 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, and gradually to pervert words from their real meaning, and to ignore and deny *facts*, they become in time so confused in their minds that truth appears to them to be falsehood, and falsehood appears to be shining Truth.

SOME BEING FREED BY THE TRUTH

These deluded ones are led into this deception partly through curiosity. It seems so strange to them to hear one 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, "These statements are certainly very inconsistent, yet I am curious to know how people reason them out. What is their philosophy?" This is just what the Adversary desires. He wishes thus to attract their attention, that step by step he may lead them from one falsity to another, until the whole brain and conscience are subverted. They have accepted darkness for light, lies for truth. For this they are rewarded with physical relief – small recompense!

This is the reward of selfishness, of unwillingness to suffer anything they could escape by any means. They preferred their own way, the way most attractive to the fallen flesh. They chose this rather than the *Truth*, which did not appeal to their flesh. They were ready to exchange the testimony of the Lord for the sake of physical ease and comfort, or to satisfy morbid curiosity. Thus they escaped troubles and pain which, if endured patiently and joyfully, would have worked out for them blessing and strengthening of character. Some who have been thus enslaved by the great Adversary, a very few, are being freed by the power of the Truth at this time. But it is a very difficult task to be thoroughly

accomplished. In some cases the experiences undergone in the efforts to break the bonds so tightly binding them have been very painful, and accompanied by buffetings from the Evil One and his hosts, who have so long held them in bondage. But it is well worth the struggle and the pain to be free from all such slavery.

ST. PAUL'S PICTURE OF PRESENT CONDITIONS

The hour of trial is not coming alike upon all, for all of Christendom are not upon the same plane – mentally, morally or physically. The trial as it is coming upon Christendom in general, however, is pictured by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He here enumerates certain characteristics of this "hour of temptation." He says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for 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 [those who cannot be trusted, would sell out their best friends for selfish considerations], heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

This is a graphic picture of present-day conditions in the Christian world, so-called. Because they received not the Truth in the love of it, therefore God has sent them "strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," and should be condemned thereby. This hour of temptation has not yet reached its greatest intensity, but we believe this stage will be reached in a very short time. Blessed are all they who have made the Lord, "even the most High, their Habitation." These shall not be moved; yet many of them will pass through most severe trials and temptations. Through the mails we learn of the struggles and prayers of many of God's children – some because of their own imperfections and frailties, and some because

of the imperfections of others; and still others are tried because of earthly cares and burdens which they seem unable to fully overcome or to cast upon the Lord.

LET US HAVE THE PROPER FEAR

We sympathize with these dear ones, and counsel them as best we can, remembering the Master's words, "Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh." (Luke 6:21.) Our heart is especially solicitous for those whose letters give evidence that they are in temptation, but realize it not – who are being swallowed up of ambition or business or other "cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches" – whose love for the Truth seems to be growing cooler instead of hotter, and who seem to *feel* less and *see* less than they did years ago. These seem to be sleeping when they should be watching and praying; and this hour of trial, we fear, is finding them unprepared; while some who are weeping, praying and striving are more like our dear Master in Gethsemane; and like Him, they will be strengthened for the final trial.

Let us each, dear brethren, be very solicitous for ourselves and for each other, and counting the prize held out to us as far dearer and more precious than all else beside, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left to us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Let us so love all the Lord's dear children that their welfare will be our chief concern; and this will mean our own spiritual health. Yet we must not allow our love even for the brethren to hinder our fullest confidence in the Lord's love and wisdom in the choice of His Bride, even though siftings should take from us some whose fellowship we have cherished. **[R5652 : page 87]**

Let us patiently hold on our way – this blessed way! Let us do with our might what our hands find to do. Soon will come the Harvest Home! Soon, if faithful, we shall gather, as a glorious company, to go out no more forever. We shall come with rejoicing,

bringing our sheaves with us! But let us remember that "we have need of *patience*, that after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise!" – Hebrews 10:36.

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

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

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