

PATIENCE

By George C. Clark, Sr. and John D. Clark, Sr.



“Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” James 5:10-11

Patience is not the absence of complaint but a determination to do the will of God regardless of the situation. At times, even the most patient characters in the Bible complained, but in their trouble and grief, they kept doing the will of God. Hannah, righteous mother of the prophet Samuel, cried, *“Out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken.”* And what was God’s response? He heard her complaint and gave her a son. Job, the epitome of patience, said, *“I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* And the psalmist wrote, *“Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide yourself from my supplication. I mourn in my complaint and make a noise.”*

Those who habitually complain are condemned as “complainers” (Jude 16); yet, those who complain to God in times of suffering are not numbered in that group. God invites His children to come to Him with their complaints. *“Call upon me in the day of*

trouble,” He said. *“I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”* Asaph responded to God’s invitation: *“In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. I remembered God, and was troubled. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed”* (Ps. 77:2-3).

No, my dear friend, complaining to God is not impatience. In fact, it is the right thing to do in times of trouble, for it demonstrates faith that God cares and is able to deliver. King David was not ashamed to complain to the Lord. *“I will cry unto God most high,”* he declared, *“unto God Who performs all things for me. . . . Yes, in the shadow of your wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast.”* We, too, may come before the Lord with our need. He will not despise us, for He knows that we are frail and needy creatures.

HATRED OF EVIL IS NOT IMPATIENCE

Some consider themselves impatient because wickedness irritates them, but the righteous Lot was daily irritated with the “filthy conduct” of the Sodomites (2Pet. 2:8). God Himself is *“angry with the wicked every day”* (Ps. 7:11), and yet, He is also *“the God of patience”* (Rom. 15:5). Hatred of evil is not impatience. Impatience is shown when one resorts to evil in order to obtain a desire or to escape some discomfort, for it indicates a lack of faith that doing the will of God is sufficient. No matter how much Job suffered, for example, he was determined to obey the commandments of God. *“My foot has held His steps,”* he said, *“His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips”* (Job 23:11-12). This, not the absence of complaint, was the patience of Job.

BEING TRIED

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you,” wrote Peter, *“as though some strange thing happened to you”* (1Pet. 4:12). Without exception, God tries the faith of all His children. Woe to those who depart from God to escape their trial! They are blessed who are faithful when their trial grows hot; they will be made even purer by the heat. We should never doubt God’s love for us, even, *“if need be, you are in heaviness*

through manifold temptations” (1Pet. 1:6). No, my friend, *“Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives”* (Heb. 12:5-6).

God tries our hearts, but we should always remember that He never tempts us to do evil. In our trials, God tempts us to do good. As James says, (1:13-14), *“Let no man say when he is tempted [to do evil], ‘I am tempted by God’, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man [with evil]. But every man is tempted [with evil] when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.”*

BOTH THE GOOD AND THE BAD

You have heard the phrase, “Something good is going to happen to you!” That saying is true. But it is not the whole truth, for it is also true that something bad is going to happen to you. Here on this earth, good and bad things happen to everybody. That is not even an issue. The issue is, will either the good or bad things in this world lure you away from the commandments of God?

Through covetousness and lust, many teach that faith is tried only when difficulties come. Not only is that wrong but that kind of thinking also blinds one to the fact that prosperity, not adversity, is the hardest trial. In Jesus’ parable of the Sower and the Seed, he taught that those who overcome adversity may afterwards themselves be overcome by prosperity (Mt. 13:1-9, 18-23). Failing to see earthly pleasures as a trial, some actually believe that earthly wealth is a mark of righteousness (1Tim.6:5). Consequently, prosperity becomes a goal that these children of God pursue! There is nothing holy about either wealth or poverty. Both are earthly conditions that believers must overcome in order to meet God in peace. The issue is not whether faith in Christ guarantees us riches. The issue is, will we maintain God’s standard of holiness regardless of our earthly status, financial or otherwise? This is the only eternally important question.

The greatest figures in the Bible are those who overcame fear and obeyed God when they were poor, and later overcame pride and obeyed God

when they were wealthy. For example, in slavery, in prison, and on the throne of Egypt, Joseph remained determined to do the will of God. And Moses, as a prince in Pharaoh's palace and as a fugitive from Pharaoh's wrath, strove to please God. David loved God and kept His commandments when he was a fugitive, hiding in caves from King Saul, and he loved God and kept His commandments when he sat on Israel's throne. At times, Jesus had multitudes singing his praises, even demanding that he be their king (Jn. 6:15). At other times, he was cursed by the same crowds. But whether praised or cursed, Jesus' mind was set on doing the will of God.

PATIENCE FIGHTS THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

When one loses his patience, he finds himself fighting spiritual battles with carnal weapons. We must not grow weary of fighting our spiritual battles with the weapons that really avail: prayer, faith, love, and truth. Otherwise, we may resort to political action, social programs, or even violence. But, *"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal"*, wrote Paul. Amen! Our hope is in Christ, and in the hands of the upright, the weapons of faith are *"mighty, to the pulling down of strongholds."* May God give us the patience to trust in the weapons of the Spirit, the only weapons that can forward the cause of Christ.

Through the power of the Spirit, Jesus enables us to continue in the love of God in every circumstance. The lowly Lamb of God, as we know, endured all manner of temptations while on this earth, yet without sin. All that people could do for him and against him, they did, from demanding that he be their king to crucifying him, but he steadfastly continued doing the will of God. His testimony is captured in this Scripture from the Bible's longest chapter, *"Many are my persecutors and mine enemies, yet do I not decline from your testimonies."* Listen to the determination of the Savior, as the Spirit spoke of his patience through the prophet of old, *"The proud had me greatly in derision, yet I declined not from your law. . . . The proud forged a lie against me, but I will keep your precepts with my whole heart. . . . They had almost consumed me upon earth, but I forsook not your precepts. . . ."*

Princes also sat and spoke against me, but your servant did meditate in your statutes."

This is patience: unrelenting obedience to God's will. It is not, as many seem to think, a stoic denial of feelings. There are very few, if any, who have not thought and at some time said, "What's the use of doing right? It isn't doing any good." Let's not be hasty, my friend. You may be accomplishing more than you think. Do not grow weary in well doing. If it is right, you *must* do it, regardless of the cost or opposition. The crown of life is not given to all who begin the race, but to those who successfully complete it. Jesus emphasized the need for patience often, but in no way did he more clearly do so than when he said, *"He who shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Mt. 24:13). And In Luke 21:19, the Lord said plainly, *"In your patience you possess your souls."* My friend, keep doing what is right. The wages of sin is still death.

PATIENCE AND PRIDE

An appreciable quantity of this enduring power comes by possessing the right attitude. The Preacher tells us (Eccl. 7:8), *"The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."* This, of course, we all know. What some do not know, however, is that the one who is proud in spirit does not, and cannot, be patient. Patience and pride are never found residing in the same temple. They are antonymous in every sense of the word. Often in the Scriptures, the proud are described as wealthy, satisfied, and popular. For example, Malachi lamented that *"We call the proud happy. Yea, they that work wickedness are set up."* But one thing is consistently absent from the life of every proud person, and that is patience. Watch them, and you will see how quickly they become angry and lose self-control, often causing very unpleasant situations for others.

A simple truth, yet difficult to grasp, is this: external circumstances do not make one an impatient person. Circumstances merely reveal the quality of our patience. To the mind of faith, external pressures are seen as opportunities to exercise and increase patience, not as threats to it.

Faith generates patience, for *"faith is the*

substance of things hoped for." Faith *"waits patiently for the coming of the Lord."* Faith rejoices not only *"in hope of the glory of God"* but also *"in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience."* Faith considers the end to be of greater importance than the beginning and never loses sight of *"the recompense of the reward."* By faith, Noah patiently built the ark. By faith, Abraham went out into the unknown, and *"after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."* And *"by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."* For the faith, *"others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."* Faith in God produces the patience required to overcome the world – and to overcome it with joy! Abraham would have waited another twenty five years for a son if God had willed it. Joseph could have spent another two years in prison doing the will of God. If it were possible for Jesus to have been treated more unjustly than he was, he could have borne it and still prayed, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

None of the difficulties or disappointments faced by the upright exhausted their patience. Indeed, just the opposite took place. The greater the suffering, the more patient they became. They all knew the truth contained in this statement from Paul: *"Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."*

"In your patience, possess ye your souls!" - Luke 21:19

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