



“Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4).

Steadfast and Sure

Central Truth: The believer can endure hardships knowing that God is in control.

L241. Date: January 1991. **Text:** James 1:1-4; I Peter 2:19-25.

Topic: Patience; Suffering: Of Believers.

“Giving all diligence, add . . . patience” (II Peter 1:5, 6). The fifth virtue which the Christian is to cultivate is the quality of patience. Patience is the power to stay under the load, the will or ability to wait or endure without complaint. It is related particularly to the bearing of suffering, provocation, delay, etc., with calmness and self-control.

The Greek word translated “patience” in the New Testament is a compound word. It is a preposition meaning “under” and a verb meaning “to abide.” *Patience* is “to abide under” or hold steady whatever the condition.

Patience may be passive, a mere standing firm without rebellion or desertion. It may be active, a bearing of the load to its appropriate end. Each aspect is needed and profitable in the Christian life, depending on the circumstances.

Patience helps perfect the Christian's character (James 1:4). The Christian who has exhibited the patience of Christ is permitted to reign with Him (II Timothy 2:12). One does not stand in his own strength in occasions that call for patience, for God empowers him to stand (Colossians 1:11).

I. THE NEED FOR PATIENCE (James 1:1)

There is a teaching abroad in our land which says that if you are in the will of God you will be healthy and wealthy. It is called the “prosperity gospel” or “health-and-wealth gospel” by those who do not accept it. The

problem with such teaching is that it does not agree with the teaching of Holy Scripture or the experience of God's people through the generations.

James addressed his epistle to people who were “scattered abroad” (verse 1). Who were they? They were Jews who had been dispersed throughout the world by the tragedies that had come upon their nation. They were experiencing “*divers temptations*” (various trials of many kinds) which resulted in the trying and testing of their faith (verse 2). Their becoming Christians had not relieved the pressures of trials that they underwent. Therefore, they had great need of patience. “Stay steady under the troubles you experience,” James encouraged them. He felt it necessary to encourage their faithfulness in trials before he approached any other subject in the epistle.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF PATIENCE (James 1:2)

“*Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.*” James means, “Consider it to be the greatest joy when you are surrounded by trials of every sort.” What a strange statement!

The attitude required is “*all joy*.” That means that a person is happy indeed with the greatest joy possible. It means that he is filled with nothing but joy — no anger, resentment, plans for revenge, or regret that he has chosen to live the lifestyle that brought the suffering to him.

The arena in which “*all joy*” is enjoyed is “*divers temptations*.” Whatever kind of trial one experiences, he is to find it an occasion of joy in all its respects.

To “*fall*” into various trials, is the word used of the poor traveler who fell among the thieves. They robbed him, beat him, and left him half dead (Luke 10:30). A trial may bring loss and suffering as well as rejection by “good” people, as in the story Jesus told. But still trials are to be the occasions of full and unrestrained joy. How strange!

What are those “*divers temptations*”? They are not inward spiritual conflicts or sinful experiences. They are the outward circumstances which one encounters in daily life — the rejection by sinners, the loss of health, the failure of finances, the betrayal of friends. Every Christian faces those situations at some time or the other.

How can you possibly “*count it all joy*” when such trials come? The key is to look at the trial from an intellectual not an emotional view. Emotionally, you see it only as a defeated hope, failed expectation, or heartbreaking fall. But intellectually you can see it from God's perspective and recognize it, not as a pleasant experience in itself, but as the means of

producing something very valuable in your life. From that view you can rejoice even while it hurts. The trial itself is not a joy, but the benefits derived from it are joyful. Thank God for giving light in your darkness of trials.

In every trial look for the good to come and say with Job, *“He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). Trust in the Lord and hold on with patience.

III. THE SEEDBED OF PATIENCE (James 1:3)

“The trying of your faith” refers to “the proving by testing your faith.” James insists that faith can grow and be refined only by being tested. As are must pass through the furnace and be melted for the impurities to be removed, so must our faith be tried. What is false is revealed and removed, and what is genuine will be improved in the furnace of trials.

Patience grows out of trials. James writes, *“The trying of your faith worketh patience”* (verse 3). It is in trials that faith becomes steadfast and develops the fortitude to endure. Remain upright and firm under all adverse circumstances. That is what patience is. You will grow in your capacity to stand steadfast as you practice it in difficulties. As muscles develop strength by being used, so patience grows from exercise. You can have patience to stay under the load only when there is a load to stay under and bear.

God has not forsaken you when trials come. He is developing you instead. *“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you”* (I Peter 5:10). (1) The God who permits you to endure trials is *“the God of all grace.”* (2) The trials you are enduring are limited to *“a while.”* (3) The trials will result in your becoming mature (*“perfect”*), established, strong, and settled on a firm foundation. Since God is doing that in your trials, you have no need to fear, to complain, or to rebel. Instead, rejoice that He is working in you to perform what pleases Him.

IV. THE PRODUCT OF PATIENCE (James 1:4)

Look at what trials can do for you. They can make you *“perfect and entire.”* What a blessed product!

To be *“perfect”* means to be full grown, mature, fully developed. Does that mean that one cannot be fully mature in the Lord without the experience of trials? Absolutely! Someone said, *“God had one Son without sin, but He has no son without sorrow.”* The imperfect world in which we live produces

various trials. But God has overruled the curse of sin for His dear children and has made those testings an occasion for spiritual development. How good He is!

To be “*entire*” means to have all your parts whole and undamaged. A man might be grown in body and yet lack an arm, a leg, or an eye. But the Christian who has passed through trials under the heavenly Father's watchful care will have all his parts fully developed and undamaged. What a promise! When the trials are ended, however extended and severe they may have been, the Christian will be mature and whole in every part. Think about that.

I think I will quit complaining or doubting when severe testings come. How about you?

But one other word must be added here. Do you say, “I don't see how any good could possibly come from what I am enduring”? Then look at James 1:5: “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . and it shall be given him.*” God will give generously of His wisdom, without rebuking you for asking, so you can see your trials in view of His purposes. Then you will believe that “*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*” (Romans 8:28).

V. THE WITNESS OF PATIENCE (I Peter 2:19, 20)

There are two possible occasions for suffering. (1) You may suffer when you are guilty and deserve to suffer as a punishment for wrongdoing. (2) You may suffer when you are innocent and the suffering is an injustice. Those two issues are mentioned in I Peter 2:19, 20.

There is no merit (and probably little profit) in one suffering because he has done wrong. That is justice. Many persons in penal institutions are suffering the punishment for wrongs done. Should we compliment them for taking it patiently? Not at all. God places no special approval on that.

But when a person does what is right and yet is made to suffer, bearing the injustice patiently, that wins the approval of God. The practice of patience under unjust sufferings is pleasing in the sight of God. He will bless the person who so endures.

VI. THE EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE (I Peter 2:21-25)

Jesus is our example in all things, even in the bearing of hardships with a meek and patient spirit. Here is what He teaches us.

First, do not do wrong (verse 22). Jesus never sinned. No deceit or treachery was ever heard from His lips. Keep your mouth in strict control

when you are suffering.

Second, do not retaliate (verse 23). When Jesus was reviled and insulted, He did not respond in kind. Insulting word for insulting word, which is so common among sinners, was never heard from our Lord.

Third, trust God to vindicate you (verse 23). Turn the matter over to Him who judges righteously. He will prove who is right by rewarding and who is wrong by punishing. Vengeance is not required on your part.

Fourth, suffer for the good of others (verse 24). Jesus bore our sins and the suffering they entailed when He went to the cross. He did it so that we could be dead to sins and live in righteousness. Since He suffered on our behalf, we can suffer for the benefit of others.

Here is how to apply the grace of patience to your personal life. (1) Do not rebel when trials come your way. (2) Look for God's hand in your trials, and trust Him even if you do not see Him there. (3) Look for what God is teaching you in your trials: humility, broken pride, an increase of faith, an arousing of your sympathy for others who suffer, etc. (4) Expect to grow through your trials as I Peter 5:10 states. (5) Make a list of your present trials and what you see God doing in you through them. (6) Memorize James 1:2, 3 and apply it to every testing you endure.

“I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song” (Isaiah 12:2).

Questions for discussion

1. How would you define patience?
2. What are the passive and the active aspects of patience?
3. Why does the Christian heed patience?
4. How can one have joy in trials?
5. Why does God permit the trying of your faith?
6. What does I Peter 5:10 teach about the good from trials?
7. What does it mean to be “perfect and entire” (James 1:4)?
8. When does God not bless a person who suffers (I Peter 2:20)?
9. What does Jesus teach us through His sufferings?
10. How can you show patience this week?