

Patience

—Part 2—

Endurance and Constancy

*“Giving all
diligence, add to
your faith virtue;
and to virtue
knowledge; And to
knowledge
temperance; and to
temperance
patience.”*
—II Peter 1:5,6

IN LAST MONTH’S ISSUE of *The Dawn*, we considered the first two elements of the grace of patience—Forbearance and Longsuffering. In the second of our two-part consideration of this important subject, we will now focus attention on the third and fourth aspects of patience—Endurance and Constancy. Compared to forbearance and longsuffering, “endurance” and “constancy” take the grace of patience to a significantly higher level of development within the Christian character, presenting new challenges and difficulties to us due to our fallen nature.

ENDURANCE

Described briefly, endurance is patience in all the experiences of life. This phrase—“all the experiences of life”—provides a clue as to why endurance is a significant step above both forbearance and

longsuffering. As discussed in last month's article, forbearance and longsuffering are most often directed toward the conduct of others, and demonstrate a proper patience to those who may say or do things in opposition to us. These attributes are to be developed in us—just as they are found in God and his son, Jesus—and evident in our dealings with all mankind.

Endurance, although including proper conduct in our relationship with others, also takes into account a whole new realm of experiences—those which do not involve others directly at all, but those experiences of life which are ours personally to live through, each and every day, and each and every moment of our Christian walk. Endurance is developed through the entire array of life's experiences which, in God's providence, he sees that we need. In particular, and as the word implies, the development of endurance comes through difficult experiences—the trials, testings, and temptations that we face in the narrow way. How true it is that if we only had pleasant experiences, and never had trials, it would be impossible to develop endurance. We know, however, that God in his wisdom sees the need for our having a mixed cup of experiences—many blessings to be sure, but also the necessary trials, so that, among the other benefits we gain from trial, endurance can be developed.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for the endurance aspect of patience is the same word as is used for the fourth and final aspect—constancy—which we will discuss later in this article. It is *Strong's* #5281, *hupomone*. When examining the meaning of this word, there are two distinct

thoughts given—one emphasizing endurance, and the other emphasizing constancy. *Strong's* and *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* use the following synonyms to describe the endurance element of *hupomone*: bearing calmly, holding fast in trial, hopeful endurance, and cheerful endurance.

We can see from these synonyms that they mark endurance as an especially high aspect of patience. Forbearance and longsuffering were defined mostly by how patience is exercised toward others in an outward manner. Endurance, however, shows a level of patience which is a quality of inward character development—that of cheerfulness, hopefulness, holding fast, and calmness—when going through the trials of the narrow way. Endurance will, of course, manifest its development in words and actions, just like forbearance and longsuffering. In its purest and highest form, however, endurance is all about inward character.

As there was a connection between forbearance and longsuffering (see last month's article), there is also a connection between longsuffering and endurance. In Colossians 1:10,11, Paul speaks of both, directing his words to us: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience [*hupomone*—endurance] and longsuffering with joyfulness."

The last two words of these verses—"with joyfulness"—provide a key for our understanding. The longsuffering Paul mentions may not be especially joyful to exercise, according to the flesh.

However, the patience, or endurance, here mentioned can only come about if we accept all our experiences, even the trials, with inward joy—cheerful endurance. Both longsuffering and endurance are necessary. We must show longsuffering, ideally doing so with a loving attitude, but we must also endure joyfully the difficult experiences of life. Notice that Paul said in verse 10 that these qualities are necessary in order for us to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.”

JOB, AN EXAMPLE OF ENDURANCE

As we consider the endurance aspect of patience, our minds turn back to the experiences of Job. The Apostle James speaks of his great endurance, saying, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience [endurance] of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”—James 5:11

Why did James say that “we count them happy” who endure, and then speak of Job, who went through such terrible trials? How could Job have been “counted happy” to endure such things as he did? The answer is in the phrase “the end of the Lord,” which means the end result of the Lord. Job saw by faith the end result that the Lord would have for him and all mankind—a resurrection from the dead. With calmness and with confident hope, he prayed to God, “O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave [death], that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change [resurrection] come.

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” (Job 14:13-15) By keeping focused on the goal—the “end of the Lord”—we, as Job, can be counted happy as we endure the difficulties of life, and exercise cheerful endurance even in the most severe trial.

FURTHER SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY

James also speaks of endurance in the first chapter of his epistle, saying, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12) As James spoke of the endurance of Job and his faith to see the end result of the Lord’s dealings with him, here he does the same concerning us, saying that by properly enduring trial, we shall receive the crown of life. This crown of life, James says, is promised only to those who love the Lord supremely, and show their love by humble obedience to his will, even under difficult circumstances and endurance of trial.

Paul also speaks concerning the need for our development of endurance. He exhorts the church with these words, “Rejoicing in hope; patient [enduring] in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” (Rom. 12:12) *Young’s Literal Translation* renders the verse as follows: “In . . . hope rejoicing; in . . . tribulation enduring; in . . . prayer persevering.” Paul here relates endurance to both hope and prayer. Truly, what better thing to focus our mind on in tribulation, enabling us to endure, than the hope of our calling. Likewise, what better practical method for maintaining that endurance than

communion with God in prayer, and perseverance in doing so. These are keys to achieving the “endurance” level of patience.

Just as Paul mentions longsuffering (vs. 4) in his famous discourse on love in I Corinthians 13, he also speaks of endurance. He says that love “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (vs. 7) Notice in this verse that Paul says love requires both forbearance—“beareth all things”—and endurance. Thus, according to Paul, the first three aspects of patience—forbearance, longsuffering, and endurance—all play an important role in the development of love.

Paul commended the Thessalonian brethren for their endurance, saying, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope [endurance of hope, *Rotherham Translation*] in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” (I Thess. 1:2,3) The three scriptures we have quoted from Paul have all mentioned our hope as well as endurance. Indeed, keeping focus on our hope is critical to our successful development of endurance—hopeful endurance.

JESUS’ EXAMPLE

Paul provides a further lesson with regard to endurance by first reminding us of those of past ages who faithfully endured. He then points us to Jesus, our ultimate example of endurance. We read, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [those of past ages such as Job and others who endured], let us

lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [endurance] the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:1-3

Paul says that Jesus “endured the cross.” This was not just the literal cross at Calvary, but it was the entire three and one-half years of his sacrifice—full of testings, trials, and sufferings—all of which he faithfully endured. Jesus also endured the “contradiction of sinners against himself.” The word “contradiction” means opposition. Thus we see that Jesus not only endured faithfully his cross of experience, he endured faithfully, and with the proper attitude, the opposition of others. Paul says Jesus endured these things “for the joy that was set before him.” His mind was fixed on the hope set before him, and this caused him to endure hopefully, joyfully, cheerfully. Paul then tells us to look “unto Jesus” and to “consider him.” He is our perfect pattern and standard of endurance in trial and testing.

CONSTANCY

The Christian’s desire should be to reach a level of spiritual maturity in which forbearance, long-suffering, and endurance, are all being carried out faithfully, and to the greatest degree possible, continuously, over the long-term course of our walk.

To the extent such is the case, we have, to that degree, reached the fourth and highest level of patience—constancy. Patience, as described by constancy, means that these attributes and traits have become so deeply embedded in our character that they become almost automatic, are ever-present, and never-changing.

As previously noted, the endurance and constancy aspects of patience both come from the same New Testament Greek word: *hupomone*. A few synonyms suggested by *Strong's* and *Thayer's* which stress constancy are continuance, steadfastness, perseverance, and a permanent setting of character. Although translated from the same Greek word, we can perhaps draw a distinction between endurance and constancy in this way. Endurance is developed through individual experiences, one built upon another, and applied properly for the purpose of spiritual growth. Constancy is achieved through these combined experiences and their proper application over a long period of time during the Christian walk. Whereas endurance signifies a means whereby we may attain spiritual growth and maturity, constancy signifies that a measurable level of spiritual growth and maturity has indeed been attained.

JESUS' AND PAUL'S WORDS

The Scriptures provide us with numerous exhortations concerning the goal of achieving constancy. It is fitting that Jesus, our perfect example, made several statements about patience as it relates to constancy, for surely he had this high level of patience in his character. For example, he said, "He

that endureth [Greek, *hupomone*] to the end shall be saved.” (Matt. 10:22) Here we have endurance mentioned, but combined with the additional words, “to the end.” This tells us that our endurance must continue throughout our entire Christian walk—to the end. This is constancy.

We find the words of Jesus again along this line in Luke 21:19, “In your patience [Greek, *hupomone*] possess ye your souls.” Possessing our souls, that is, our New Creature being, with patience also points to constancy. *Moffat* translates the word for patience in this verse as “steadfast.” It is by steadfastness over the long-term in our Christian walk that patience truly comes into full “possession” of our being. This should be our goal, according to Jesus’ words. This is constancy.

Paul also encouraged the church concerning the goal of achieving constancy. He wrote to the brethren in Rome, encouraging them to be among those “who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) Here the same Greek word *hupomone* is translated “patient continuance.” Those seeking for glory, honor, and immortality, Paul says, can only achieve these goals through patient continuance—a lifetime of faithfulness in patience. This, also, is constancy.

In his last epistle, Paul encouraged his “son” Timothy with these words, saying, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (II Tim. 2:12) The word translated “suffer” is here again *hupomone*, the Greek word for patience. The *Bible in Basic English* gives a more accurate thought. “If we go on to the end, then we will be ruling with him.” Going on to the end, continuance in our endurance, will gain us

the victory and a share in Christ's reign of blessing. This, too, is constancy.

Paul similarly stresses patience over the long haul of our Christian life with these words, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36) *Moffat* gives the thought of constancy in his translation, phrasing the first part of the verse: "steady patience is what you need." Doing the will of God, as Paul makes mention of, is the lifetime work, the essence of our consecration, and will be critical until our dying breath. One of the keys to success in doing God's will, and thus receiving the promised inheritance, is steady patience. Here, again, is constancy.

We noted earlier, with regard to endurance, Paul's commendation to the Thessalonian brethren in his first epistle to them. Paul also commended them in his second epistle, this time in regard to constancy. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."—II Thess. 1:3,4

The "patience and faith" demonstrated in "all" their persecutions and tribulations, along with their "charity," or love, toward each other, gives indication that these brethren were well on their way to this highest mark of patience—constancy. It is not coincidental that the last word in this verse, translated "endure," takes us back to the first aspect of patience, because it is the Greek word for

“forbearance.” So here in this verse, Paul makes the full connection. The persecutions and tribulations in which we exercise forbearance, as the Thessalonian brethren did, if further developed into longsuffering, and then endurance, combined with faith and love, will eventually lead us to constancy—patience in its highest form.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Constancy and its various synonyms, such as patient continuance, steadfastness, and perseverance, can perhaps be summarized by drawing on a familiar analogy. Our Christian walk is a multitude of different kinds of experiences. We say that some experiences put us on the high mountaintop of blessing, while in other experiences we feel as though we are deep in the valley of trial. Still many other experiences seem to be between these two extremes, coming to us on the various plateaus of daily life. Achieving constancy does not diminish the mountaintop joys, nor does it eliminate the valley experiences. What it does do, however, in the spirit of our mind, is to keep us, as New Creatures—the inner man—from feeling as though we are on a roller coaster. As we have seen through the Scriptures, this attainment requires time, spiritual maturity, and much faith. It requires success in forbearance, longsuffering, and endurance—multiplied by the full complement of experiences and lessons learned in the Christian walk.

There are perhaps no better scriptures with which to conclude our discussion of the grace of patience than James 1:2-4. These verses show the need of, the working of, and the result of, adding this

all-important element to our character. They read, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials]; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect [complete] work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting [lacking] nothing.” Let us strive toward this goal, that patience will indeed have its perfect and complete work in us—completeness in forbearance, long-suffering, endurance, and constancy—to the end of our course.

