

13. Patience – God’s Perfect Work

At this point in the climbing process—sanctification—it is essential to remember that this is a total work of faith. It is only as we do our part—recognizing the obstructions and hindering factors, then realizing that we cannot remove them ourselves—that we exercise the power of the will and choose to be free from these encumbrances. Only then can God do His work in us. He will never force the will but waits for us to use it to permit Him to remove these. We have just discovered that if this work is done at all He will have to do it. Remember, we have “not the wisdom or the strength to overcome” evil.¹ This must be kept clearly in mind as we face each step.

Peter says, “Add . . . to temperance patience . . . “ 2 Peter 1:16. “The most precious fruit of sanctification is the grace of meekness.”² A quick look in Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary will convince anyone of the close relationship of patience and meekness.

Without doubt, God was able to develop this trait of His character in Moses more perfectly than in any other human being. However, even in him one failure, even though he was forgiven, prevented God from being able to fulfill His plans for Moses’ life here on this earth. We see here a perfect blend of God’s justice and mercy. “Genuine sanctification . . . is nothing less than a daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God.”³

This principle of sanctification strikes right at the very root of the problem of this step of patience, for the greatest hindering factor is pride. We have heard of impetuous Peter—the man who always spoke and acted before he thought.

“The evil that led to Peter’s fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is providing the ruin of thousands today. There is nothing so offensive

to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, and the most incurable.”⁴

Pride and self-sufficiency work on the human mind exactly opposite to humility and self-surrender. This is why when we try to control ourselves and fail, we try harder the next time. All human effort expended to be patient will never produce the fruit of patience. A strong enough motivation may produce an appearance of patience—salesmen often do this. Customers may be completely fooled, for the public image is often quite different from what one is at home.

Our problem seems to be that pride takes the way of expediency. It can appear to be humble, teachable, calm, and even patient.

“Some of us have a nervous temperament, and are naturally as quick as a flash to think and act; but let no one think that he cannot learn to become patient. Patience is a plant that will make rapid growth if carefully cultivated.”⁵

Cultivation is a process that removes anything that hinders the growth of the plant that is desired. The removal process is not the problem with most of us. It is the failure to be willing to admit what needs to be removed from the character, and to be willing to turn it over to the Lord for Him to remove. If patience is to make rapid growth, there must be a sincere self-examination and willingness to face up to the true facts. “It was on the point where he thought himself strong that Peter was weak; and not until he discerned his weakness could he realize his need of dependence upon Christ.”⁶

Patience can take on another cloak that we should examine.

“There are many who, when they are reprov'd, think it praiseworthy if they receive the rebuke without becoming impatient; but how few take reproof with

gratitude of the heart, and bless those who seek to save them from pursuing an evil course.”⁷

Obviously, patience reaches into areas that we have thought little about. It requires more than refraining from retaliation. Patience seeks to look at every situation or person in the best light possible.

Read Hebrews 11 and catch a vision of the cloud of witnesses from Abel to Samuel and on to an army of unnamed men and women who, though Christ, vanquished Satan and his hosts of evil angels. Then catch the picture of yourself in chapter 12 as Paul says, “. . . let us lay aside every weight . . .”—that is every hindrance. Cultivate out every weed and break up the hard ground. He then speaks of “. . . the sin which doth so easily beset us . . .” Hebrews 12:1. Here we have the old habits that are still with us from the old nature that Satan uses so often.

“Selfishness and pride will make a stand against anything that would show them to be sinful. We cannot, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that strive for the mastery. We cannot overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory . . . But He cannot work in us without our consent and co-operation.”⁸

Having done all this, then we can “. . . run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . .” Hebrews 12:1,2

James was one of the sons of thunder. With John, his brother, he would have called fire down from heaven to destroy those who did not readily accept Jesus and the disciples into their city. Jesus, however, was able to change all this so that James knew of the perfect work of patience and left us this counsel, “. . . let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” James 1:4

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Notes

- 1 The Acts of the Apostles, p. 532.
- 2 My Life Today, p. 253.
- 3 My Life Today, p. 248.
- 4 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 154.
- 5 My Life Today, p. 97.
- 6 The Desire of Ages, p. 382.
- 7 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 667.
- 8 Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 142.