

Partakers of His Holiness

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete"—2 Thessalonians 3: 5

We are gathered around the Lord's table this morning because he has said, *"This do in remembrance of me."*

Before we partake of the bread and wine, it is necessary that a few words be spoken to center our minds on the central figure of our meeting. The words of exhortation also bring about a condition which will be in accord with Isaiah's words in his praise to God—

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3)

In the quietness of our meeting, we can keep our minds wholly stayed on the things concerning the kingdom of God and of His Son. Yet we must seek to develop our minds to rest on this prospect at all times.

When we return to the outside world, there is a tendency for our minds to be distracted by many things which, in most cases, are unavoidable. We are also called upon to endure much tribulation during our sojourn in the age of our probation.

There is no such condition, in this age, as perfect peace externally for those who have placed their feet on the path which is straight and narrow.

Paul says in 2 Thess. 3:5—

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete."

According to the American College Dictionary, the word "patience" means "calm and uncomplaining endurance," or "calmness in waiting."

Paul tells us to be "patient in tribulation." There will always be tribulation for those who walk in the way God has set before them, but the question is, *can we be patient while suffering this condition?*

For an example we turn again to Paul's words—

*"Though he were a Son yet **learned he obedience** by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8.)*

One of our brethren, in his comments on Paul's words, said—

"It is God's method of perfecting character and laying the foundation of lasting joy. We may be quite sure, there is no mistake about it, that God's way is the best.

"We may be quite sure that goodness will be all the sweeter and salvation all the more precious and the glory to God all the more fervent, for the prelude of suffering and weariness and waiting that goes before."

"We know from experience that no one is developed until he has known trouble. He may be good, but he is unsympathetic. He may be interesting, but he is not entirely disinterested. There is always a degree of refined selfishness about those who have only known of pleasure.

"Trouble, if there be the right material to work on, removes the dross of the character, subdues and purifies and refines and ennobles and makes fit for the kingdom of God. Therefore it is that the community of the glorified saints, as a whole, are described in the Apocalypse as—

"Those who have come out of great tribulation."

When we hear the word "patience" mentioned at any time there immediately comes into our mind the phrase, "The patience of Job." James says, (Jam. 5:11)—

"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."

Paul, in chapter 12 of his epistle to the Hebrews, said—

"Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him:

"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?

"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?

that "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit we might be partakers of His holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:5-12).

Job was the type of a beloved son of God—one of the "chastened and scourged" sons whom He receiveth. The name "Job" means, "one persecuted." His experiences were in harmony with his name.

In the first chapter of his book we are told that he was a man of Uz, and that he was perfect and upright and feared God and avoided evil. In v. 8 we have the Word of God—

"There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil."

An illustration of Job's perfection and uprightness may be found recorded in v. 5, where we are told that he acted as priest of his family, he sent and sanctified them and offered burnt offerings. The adversary had contended that Job's allegiance to God was of a mercenary character and that if the Divine blessings were removed he would at once renounce God. Soon after, by God's power, Job was stripped of all his substance, his oxen, his sheep, his camels and his family. This calamity he accepted patiently.

We know that Job was conscious of his own uprightness and he could not understand why God should be so harsh towards him. The explanation comes in chapter 38. God, by a series of questions, proved to Job that he had *spoken without knowledge and that he had uttered words he did not understand*. In Ch. 42, Job answered God with these words—

"I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?

"Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

"Hear, I beseech Thee and I will speak. I will demand of Thee and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

There is much we can learn from this lesson of Job. We learn that God will surely bring those whom He loves to respect and honor Him in humble submission and self-abasement. *We learn that their corrections will continue till they cease from murmuring and boasting and censuring.*

We learn that Job was a type of Christ, but the abasements, temptations and sufferings of Christ were vastly greater than those of Job. Christ was tempted and suffered and triumphed, but he endured them with perfect patience. If we follow his patience, we shall find "that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Paul tells us that "we have *need* of patience" (Heb. 10:36). Patience is a necessary characteristic and one that true believers should cultivate earnestly. There are many places in the Scriptures where the lack of this virtue has brought disaster to the one involved.

In 1 Sam. 13:8, we are told that Saul grew impatient and offered a sacrifice when Samuel did not appear at the appointed time. Verse 14 tells us the penalty Saul received for his lack of faith—

"But now **thy kingdom shall not continue**. The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Saul's impatience was because of a lack of faith, and how great the sentence passed on him! Is it not a warning to us? Impatience appears as the result of a *lack of faith in God*.

"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Faith comes by reading the Word of God, not only in our Bibles, but also by reading the words left for us by faithful brethren who are now sleeping in the patient waiting for the great day of the Lord.

In Romans 8:20, Paul speaks of our faith and hope—

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

That is, "calm and uncomplaining endurance," or "calmness in waiting." In Romans 15:5, Paul shows patience to be a characteristic of God and a characteristic which must be developed in us—

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God."

In Rom. 2 he exhorts us to patient continuance in well-doing:

"God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (v. 7).

The words "patience" and "tribulation" are used together many times by Paul, as for example in Rom. 5:3 and 12:12. He says it takes much tribulation to work patience and godliness. It takes tribulation to *turn our minds and hopes to a higher level* and to teach us the vanity and insecurity of

our present positions. Many times God's servants had to labor alone, and Paul was one of them. In 2 Tim. 1:15, he stated—

"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Only Luke is with me."

During Paul's labors, many who were called brethren, were ashamed of his poverty, his speech and his conduct. No doubt they said it was foolish for Paul to be so insistent on sound doctrine and so forceful in the maintenance of the Truth in its purity. Would not a little worldly wisdom and discretion have eased his situation? *There were a few who perceived the true values, and for these Paul thanked God.*

Without these few he would have found the effort far greater to bear. The words of James are applicable to all of us:

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

not "Be ye also patient, establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold the Judge standeth before the door.

of "Take my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example 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."

He is still the same God, and is ever mindful of our trials and weaknesses. He will help us if we but trust in Him implicitly. Let us have the patience to wait and work for the consolation.

And—"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"*He that endureth unto the end shall be saved.*"

—M.R.