


CHRISTIAN PATIENCE



I

Patience a Rarity

PATIENCE is a very desirable possession, a precious treasure. It is a gift of God to the broken-hearted. Patience is not a common possession. We rarely meet with it, but it is frequently confused with imitations called “submissiveness” and “resignation.”

Patience does not sparkle in the sunlight of the day. It glows in the darkness, with an inner light. It glows in the night of suffering—of physical suffering, but especially of spiritual suffering, when the soul wrestles in deepest distress.

Patience is not like a beautiful climbing rose that twines its blossom-laden branches about the cross of life; it is rather like the modest spice-bush, without beauty of form or color, which perfumes the air with pungent sweetness.

Patience is like the nightingale, that has no beauty of plumage but sings sweetly in the dark night.

Or it is a precious stone which has no luster until the skilled worker has cut and ground and polished it.

Patience is one of the holy adornments with which Jesus Himself adorns the soul after He has cleansed it with His righteousness.

Christian patience has little in common with its namesakes found among men and women who live as “good neighbors” but are strangers to the grace of God. For in the heart that is not born anew true patience cannot grow. Such a heart

THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



has not the needed soil, and the atmosphere of the un sanctified life tends rather to wither it. A light brighter than the light of the sun, light from God Himself, unfolds its blossoms.

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit.

Its seed is not within us.

Its branches twine about the cross of Christ. Its goal is eternity. Its glory is in the grace of God.

Patience ought to be the possession of every child of God. If it is not his when he is reborn, it ought to grow within him as he grows in Christ.

But it is sadly lacking among us.

That is evident from our restlessness, from our aversion to the cross, though we hide that aversion behind a veil of resignation. It is especially evident when suffering fails to produce spiritual fruit, even suffering that is drained to the bitter dregs with apparent willingness.

We need patience. We need it to comfort us in trouble, to renew in us the joy of being God's children, to revive our song of praise as we bear the cross which His love assigns us.

Then shall not God's people lend willing ears to what the Word has to say about patience?

WE GLORY IN STRENGTH



II

We Glory in Strength

BY NATURE man is averse to patience. By nature man admires that which is strong and vigorous and powerful.

This is true not only of the man to whom the world is all. We Christians, too, because of the natural man within us, tend to enjoy a display of strength, and we watch with breathless interest when there is an exhibition of great power.

The ancients gloried in the games of the arena, where strength was pitted against strength. And how they worshipped the proud winner! That was not heathenish; it was human—human according to the standards of fallen man.

Today we still burn incense to our heroes and idolize them. We build monuments to those who fought great battles and performed valiant deeds. The human heart is ever ready to praise one who can do and dare, one who excels in physical prowess or in mental genius, one who keeps us spellbound by his daring and courage.

Such hero-worship is found among children at play, among young people at school, and among adults as well.

The idea of “a lamb that is dumb before the shearer” has no appeal to the world.

Stephen kneeling meekly under the rain of stones does not thrill men.

“Turn him thy left cheek also” is folly to them.