


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.

THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



Patience is despised.

Energy! Power! Strength! In these man glories.

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And rightly!

For in this, as in all things, man is groping for the real and the true. With its little remaining instinct, man's sinful natural unregenerated heart always reaches out hungrily for reality and truth. But it does not seek them in God. Therefore when man thinks to climb upward, he is plunging downward. He clutches at an ideal and grasps an imitation, a sham.

So the child of God, too, desires and admires power. For true strength and power belong to Him who is the All-powerful, the Almighty; to His Son, who brought life to the dead; to the Spirit who, emanating from the Father and the Son, renews the face of the earth.

Strength is the glory of a Christian—strength to fight, to wrestle, to endure.

The devout child of God, who walks close to his God, protests against "submissiveness." Meek submission is contrary to the Word, contrary to the very nature of godliness, a failure to recognize the very essence of the Spirit.

Submissiveness is not a fruit of grace. It is rather an effort to earn favor.

How often a sufferer is told to "submit to the will of God," to be "resigned," to be meek and humble under the hand of God!

But that is not what God's Word means when it exhorts to patience.

True patience is not meek submission to the inevitable, or apathetic drifting without resistance.

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True patience, Biblical patience, is energy, buoyancy. It is strength—a strength more than earthly in origin.

It is *endurance*.

True patience is a mystery. Only the initiated can understand it. Only in faith can we attain to it.

Consider how two men accept inescapable suffering. One fears the pain and eagerly avails himself of the anesthetic which will make him insensible to the cutting knife. He does not want to suffer. He submits, but refuses to feel the pain. The other wants to know what is going on. Though the pain will be severe, he steels himself to bear it; he remains keenly sensitive to the knife, and endures the pain without complaint or moan. His is not mere submission. It is endurance.

Endurance is an exercise of heroic strength.

Have you experienced this higher strength, the strength of Christian patience?