


## A STRENGTH OF THE SPIRIT



literally rejoices when an opponent appears with whom he may come to grips.

Therefore the apostle goes on to say, "And not only so," not only have we taken our stand in the arena, "but we rejoice in our tribulations." That is, we are glad to face an opponent; we would not be left standing in the center of the arena like fools, vainly waiting for someone to come. For to wrestle was our purpose. I Because we know, so Paul concludes, "that tribulation worketh endurance, approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us."

When we are attacked, when our opponent takes hold and attempts to throw us, only then does our strength appear. Then every muscle is strained; each fierce attack inspires more determined resistance; we exert ourselves to the utmost, putting forth all our strength to remain standing. And thus endurance is born.

When the first assailant slinks away, having failed to triumph over us, we have confidence to enter a second bout, and with an even stronger opponent. We have tested our strength; by enduring, we have proved our ability to endure. Thus *endurance worketh approvedness*. The tribulation of struggle called forth strength to endure; the endurance produced the confidence of approvedness; and with that new confidence hope waxes stronger—the hope of *never* being overcome by an assailant, the hope of eventually winning the crown.

Thus the child of God, struggling against the forces of evil in and around him, discovers within himself a God-given strength which enables him to *endure* all assault triumphantly.

## Meekness

IT is remarkable that patience, or endurance, is mentioned frequently in the New Testament and not in the Old. Surely, the recipients of God's grace under the Old Covenant also wrestled; theirs was a like holy faith with ours; they looked for the fulfilment of like promises of glory. Yet in reference to their spiritual life "patience" is never mentioned. Neither psalmist nor prophet exhorted them to patience or endurance. And when the New Testament makes mention of patience in the Old Testament, it is not in reference to an Israelite but to a man in Arabia, named Job. Patience (or endurance is not extolled in a Moses or an Elijah.

The reason for this lies in the difference between Old Testament and New Testament calling.

In Old Testament times, the people of God were a separate people, living apart from other nations, enclosed as it were within the limits of a special country. The church of the New Covenant, on the contrary, overflows the borders of nationality; it spreads to all people; it is in the midst of the world, and may not rest until the Cross of Christ has been planted to the very ends of the earth.

Consequently the faith of God's Old Testament people was subjected to tests quite different from those which try His New Testament children.

## MEEKNESS



In Old Testament times, believers suffered oppression and scorn from those who were brothers according to the flesh; the followers of Jesus are subject to the scorn and vexations of the world.

Among brethren there was the kiss of a Judas, the oath of a Caiaphas who confessed the same God, and the mocking laugh of a Herod. But quite different is the enmity of the world—the coldness of a Pilate, who acquits and yet condemns, the mockery of rude Roman soldiers, the scourging and the crucifixion. Not as if there were no Judases in our ranks today, or as if there had been no enmity from the world in olden times. There are false brethren among us, and in olden times there were Pharaohs and Nebuchadnezzars. But the chief opposition to godliness in Israel came from false brethren, while among us the chief opposition is the antagonism of the world.

For these two diverse needs of His people, the Holy Spirit kindles two diverse virtues—overagainst hatred of false brethren *meekness*; overagainst the molestations of the world *endurance*.

That man is meek who resists the desire to return evil for evil, to retaliate with bitter words when he is wronged. That man has endurance who can stand firm and maintain his faith in God amid troubles and oppression.

Accordingly, in the Old Testament meekness is lauded; but in the New Testament endurance is enjoined.

Moses, the man of God, did not suffer from onslaughts of the world. His soul was constantly burdened with the complaints and murmurings of his own people. Therefore it is said of him, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men.”

## THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



And the Psalmist sings, "The meek shall inherit the earth"—words which Jesus quoted in His sermon on the Mount.

In the Old Testament the meek, though for a time down-trodden, were assured final triumph. "The Lord upholdeth the meek." "The meek will He guide in justice." "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." "He will beautify the meek with salvation." "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord."

Job, on the other hand, is a glorious example of patience, or endurance. His suffering did not come from his own brethren but, under God's direction, from Satan. In one day he was bereft of his children and all his possessions. Then his body was afflicted with dreadful disease. In his trouble Job's great difficulty was not that he must conquer a desire for revenge, but that he must remain faithful to his God in spite of crushing adversities and in the face of taunts. Job's triumph was not that he remained meek overagainst his wife and his friends, but that he permitted no one and nothing to shake his faith in God.

The Israelites, too, had to wrestle "to keep the faith." That is evident from their history and also from the Psalms. But in the main their enemies, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, did not demand that they forswear God and worship idols. Except once—and that one attempt called forth a miracle which caused the great Nebuchadnezzar to humble himself before the God of heaven.

However insistent one may be upon the one-ness of Old Testament and New Testament faith, nevertheless there is a great difference. Theirs was a time of shadows and promises. They had only the assurances; we have, at least in part, the reality. They awaited the coming of the Messiah; they longed for His salvation and while waiting they sought shelter in

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the secret place of the Most High. They found refuge in His tabernacles while the promised glory tarried, and they constantly spurred one another on, as we read in the Psalms, to renewed trust in the faithfulness of Him who promised. "Wait for the Lord, O my soul." "For Thee, O Lord, do I wait all the day."

For the New Testament believer the wonders of the manger and the cross are realities. True, he awaits the return of the Lord. And he is also called to meekness, particularly in relation to his fellow-believers. But meekness and waiting are not his chief concern. He has a battle to fight, a God-given calling to go out into the world, where he will meet resistance, where enemies will try to destroy him body and soul. Against these he must have strength to stand, he needs the spiritual strength to *endure*.

Jesus, who suffered much of the priests and scribes, speaks of his own meekness, but never of endurance. "Learn of me that I am meek and lowly of heart." "Behold, your King cometh, meek . . ." And He a King! His apostles praise ". . . the meekness and gentleness of Christ . . ." (II Cor. 10:1) toward the people of Israel and their blind leaders. But they also praise His endurance, His steadfastness or patience, before Pilate and throughout His suffering upon the cross (II Thess. 3:5).