

## MEEKNESS

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 Thèe, 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).

## The Man of Sorrows

ENDURANCE is a Christian virtue in a very special sense. **E** Not as we commonly understand “Christian virtue”—merely a virtue commanded and exemplified by Christ. But a *Christian* virtue because it is inseparably linked with Christ. Endurance originated with the coming of Jesus into the world; wherever it is found in a Christian it is his through Christ; and with the return of Christ there shall no longer be need of it.

In his original state, man did not require endurance. The command was, “Do this and thou shalt live.” Adam and Eve in Paradise were under the “covenant of works,” as our forefathers called it. Man was made for the joy of eternal life with God, but he had to earn it. It was not to be his as a gift of grace, “without money and without price.” That glorious gospel was not one of the glories of Paradise. Man was to attain eternal life by his own strength; it was to be a reward of merit.

Note the contrast. For Adam, strength preceded the possession of eternal life; under the Covenant of Works, he was *given* strength to *do*, *after* which he would be rewarded with eternal life. And that reward none would try to take from him. But under the Covenant of Grace eternal life is *first given* to man, and with that gift the strength to keep it, while at the same time there is an equal power, the power of evil, which strives to wrest the gift from us.

## THE MAN OF SORROWS



God brought His Christ into the world to redeem sinners. And had there been no sin, Christ would not have been sent.

At first the coming of the Christ into the world was only in *spoken word*; there was prophecy to utter that word; there was altar service to symbolize the meaning of the word; there was a people in whom this word lived; there was a history which gradually unrolled the word into deed; and there was a separateness which prevented that the word should be lost or forgotten.

In opposition to this spoken word Satan hardly showed himself. He struck his first blow in Paradise, but that was before the Covenant of Grace. He played his part with Job, but that was outside of Israel. He is mentioned in Psalm 109, and again at the time of David's numbering of the people. Zacharias mentions him in prophecy. But he is not at all prominent in the life of Israel.

It is in the wilderness of Judea that he steps forth boldly at last to face the Word become Flesh, the Son of God. Then the Prince of demons takes up his position against the Prince of the Lord's hosts.

For then at last the spoken and symbolized word was visible. Then there was Holiness upon earth in such form that it could be resisted and opposed, it could be besmirched and perhaps destroyed.

But against the attacks of Satan, Christ was adamant. All Satan's frenzy and hatred were vain. He did not win even a momentary victory.

That heavenly strength which overcame every effort to thrust the Holy One out of the world is endurance. Christ was the first to display endurance overagainst Satan. He was truly the patient one.

## THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



And it is He who works that same strength in those who are His.

This patience of Jesus is not displayed in His attitude toward His people, who grieved Him and persecuted Him, but in His spiritual struggles against Satan. First in the wilderness, later during His physical suffering in Pilate's judgment hall and upon the cross, He was steadfast, He endured.

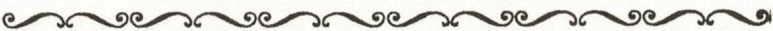
Satan left nothing untried in his efforts to crush that glorious, holy, divine life, to corrupt it, to destroy it. But the holiness of Jesus was neither marred nor even slightly soiled. The Father caused Him to walk as it were through fire, but it did not singe His robes or His hair; He plunged Him like white wool into sticky mire, but the whiteness came out resplendent. The full glory of Jesus' endurance is revealed when, on the third morning, He arises from the grave; He endured that last enemy, and overcame it—death!

Thus ended Satan's battle over the Word as *such*. There is nothing more he can do now against the Christ.

But there is another warfare, another opportunity for Satan. He can still fight those who confess the Son, the followers of the Christ.

Jesus ascended into heaven. To those whom He left behind He entrusted the great cause of carrying the torch of God. From the Sun of Righteousness sparks were kindled in thousands of hearts. Toward these followers of Christ Satan now directs his hatred, a hatred made even more terrible, if possible, by the humiliating defeat. And the followers of Christ are weaker than their Master. So with renewed fury Satan returns to the attack.

## THE MAN OF SORROWS



Hence the persecutions of the early Christians. Hence the spiritual agonies, worse than physical pain, which the followers of Christ experience.

Satan has never ceased in his efforts to tear the truth from the grasp of God's children, and to wrench them from the hand of God. But against his attacks the followers of Jesus have triumphed, throughout the centuries, by *endurance*.

They have not yielded. They have not swerved from the path. They have not lost hold of that which they once received. Even when they died in the flames, the spark of life spurted from them into other hearts, and thousands were converted that they might carry on.

The martyrs *endured*. By the *patience* of the saints Satan's plans were frustrated.

Whence that struggle to endure? Was it of ourselves?

No, my dear reader!

But what appeared to be, was not. Christ had ascended to heaven. Yet He was *not* gone. On the contrary, having taken our flesh with him into heaven, he established once and for all His power over the world and over the spirits that hover destructively about it.

Jesus and His own—they are not two but *one*. Even as the branches are one with the vine.

Most surely *they* would have retreated, stumbled, succumbed. But He, dwelling within them, cannot be conquered. His strength was greater than their weakness.

When Satan thought he had only his one-time friends to wrestle with, he found himself once again fighting a losing battle with the Lion of Judah!

*In Him* is our *endurance*.

Therefore it does not fail.