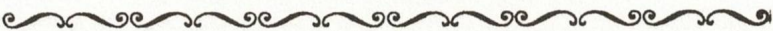


THE MAN OF SORROWS



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.

THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



VII

Maranatha

PATIENCE, or endurance, flows forth from Jesus; it ought to accompany confession of Him; it glorifies Him; it is inseparable from His service.

There is a story told of an altar boy who, in the fulfillment of his duties, was called upon to hold a fragrant incense burner before the great king Alexander. While he was thus holding the censer, a live coal burst out and fell upon the boy's naked arm. But the boy did not flinch. Though he could smell the odor of his own burning flesh, he held the censer steady before the king. How could he permit his pain to interrupt a service in honor of a king's majesty.

You who are the Lord's, such is your calling in the service of Jesus, your Lord.

Your life is to be one continuous flow of praise, one constant faithful service. Should Satan in some manner press a live coal into your flesh, hoping to cause you to drop the censer of your love and worship, you must not waver; though the fire scorch you, you must keep your arm steadily outstretched, to the honor of your Lord.

Whatever may come, though the waves go over your head, you may not retreat nor waver. "Keep what thou hast!" is the watchword of the Christian. The apostle exclaims triumphantly, "I have *kept* the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!"

MARANATHA



The “keeping,” the *not losing hold of*, that is the endurance of the child of God.

All oppression, all scorn, all persecution has no other purpose than to induce the Christian to give up his most precious possession, to let go his faith, to lose his hope.

But he does not let go. He holds his treasure in a grasp that will not loosen, and he wears out the enemy with the unshakable strength of endurance.

“O Timothy,” Paul cries out to his faithful helper, “*keep* that which is committed to thy trust!” Nothing else matters, says the writer to the Hebrews, “if we but *hold fast* our confidence and the joy of our hope firm to the end.” Elsewhere we read, “Let us *hold fast* the confession of our hope, that it waver not!” And when Satan, seeing he cannot wrest our precious possession from us, attempts to drag us down bodily, then we must, like Moses, endure “as seeing Him who is invisible,” by faith.

For endurance and *faith* go hand in hand, as Paul writes to the Thessalonians. “We glory in you in the churches of God for your patience *and faith* in all your persecutions and afflictions.” (Compare Rev. 2:19, and 13:10). Endurance consists of just that, a holding on to our *faith* in spite of suffering or scorn, not permitting trouble to darken the truth of God, always ready when asked, “Do you still hold fast to your righteousness?” to answer unhesitatingly, “Yes!”

Endurance is also linked with *love*. Paul writes to the persecuted Thessalonians, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience (endurance) of Christ.” Perhaps you at times discover secret rebellion deep within your heart even while you apparently resign yourself to suffering. That would indicate a doubt of the love of God. Satan plants such seeds of doubt within the heart, and thus

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chills your love for the Christ. All things work together for good. But only “to them that love God,” to those whose love for God is not sapped by pain and trouble. Indeed, the secret of true endurance is love, love which sustains the weak, which gives strength to the broken reed against the stormy winds of trial.

Then, too, by our endurance we retain that other of the three beautiful jewels—*hope*. Paul writes to the Romans, “That through patience (endurance) and through the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.” That hope is a window through which we catch glimpses of eternal glory. Satan desires to shut off our view with the heavy curtains of doubt and trouble. But he cannot. With the strength of endurance we who are Christ’s push aside the curtains and once more gaze upon the glories to come.

For even as endurance originates in Jesus, it also finds its fulfilment in the Beloved One. If there were no sure *hope of Jesus’ return*, there would be no strength to endure.

A Christian faith which finds its end in the manger and the cross, and which has no longing for the return of the Lord, is neither healthy nor apostolic nor true. Jesus’ coming to the manger and to the cross is inseparable from His coming again upon the clouds. The latter is necessary to complete the former. If Jesus were not coming again, the Divine drama would be without a closing scene, without the unfolding of the plot and the solution of the mystery.

A Christian is not the irrational dreamer he is often thought to be, with impossible aspirations and unattainable ideals. He knows very well that he was created not for suffering but for happiness. He is fully aware that suffering is unnatural and that joy should be man’s portion. In the depths of his soul he is convinced that man can willingly

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suffer the miseries of the moment only if he is certain that, in due time, they will be followed by joy and happiness.

He knows, too, that it is pleasanter to be “clothed in soft raiment and live in kings’ palaces” than to wear camel’s hair and roam the wilderness or hide in dens and holes. But he knows even more surely that there is no comparison between transient earthly pleasures and the immeasurable glory and beauty of the eternal Jerusalem.

Very soberly, therefore, he makes his choice. On one side of the scales are the joys and riches of this world. On the other side are the thorns and the cross, side by side with the glories of eternal life. The Christian sees clearly that one side of the scale wholly outweighs the other. His conclusion is, “Yes, I count all things but loss, but refuse, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” And to others he expresses his conviction triumphantly. “My brother, my sister, no matter how intense the suffering of this present time may be, it is not to be compared with the glory that shall be!” That shall be—not this side of heaven without God, but in heaven and with Him who is the Fountain of all good, the glorious and eternal Son of God. Shall be—when He returns!

VIII

Cross Bearing

IF we think that the earthly pathway of God's children is for the most part pleasant and easy, with only an occasional cross, we are mistaken. The child of God who is new upon the way, and weathers his first storm, may think: This will soon be over and then the breezes will blow gently again. But as we go on, we learn by many a disappointment, as well as from the Word of the Lord, that such is not our lot. When one wave of the sea breaks, another follows close behind. So troubles continually roll over the heads of God's children. The cross must be carried daily.

“All who would live a godly life shall suffer persecution.” And “without much tribulation ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of God.” Never can we escape the cross. And the proof of the genuineness of our endurance is just this, that we take up our cross daily, taking such burdens as God lays upon us, and bear the cross upon the way where He leads.

Only the child of God, he who is saved by the blood of the Son of God, is a cross bearer. For only such suffering may be counted cross-bearing which is borne for love of God, in the strength of Christ, and for His Name's sake. None other deserves that title.

The Christian's sorrows and burdens are not always obvious. The cross is not always one which the world can see. Indeed not. Bitterest of all the agonies which wring the human heart are often those that only God knows.