

PATIENCE

HE who wants his desire to be accomplished by God must exercise the virtue of PATIENCE. If one temptation or trouble comes upon the heels of another, and a train of them is drawn upon a Christian, patience is an indispensable requirement for him to triumph over the adversary and have his end crowned with glory.

Patience means the quality or habit of enduring quietly under pain or annoyance; or the state of being able to await events without worry or complaint.

The Holy Bible shows that patience is a virtue-a good thing that everyone who worships God in truth should have. The Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is Himself the God of patience, and He is long-suffering. As it is written: "But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." – Psalm 86: 15; see also Romans 15: 5 and 2 Peter 3:9.

A person who does not have patience cannot serve God faithfully till the end, and so he will certainly be unable to obtain salvation. It is patience coupled with faith that will make us endure the tribulations and temptations of the devil without offending God or falling away from His Organisation. Jesus Christ said: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24: 12, 13) Again he counselled: "In your patience possess ye your souls." – Luke 21: 19.

God's Time

God's time is the best, it is often said. But how many people have the patience to wait for God and His time? The ungodly desire of some to get rich quick has pushed them into committing crimes which landed many in jail and made some die untimely. It is those who wait on God with patience and continue to do righteousness in faith that He blesses NOW in this old world and will make to inherit the New World in abundance of peace and happiness. King David in his inspirational songs stated: "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD they shall inherit the earth." – Psalm 37: 7-9.

In whatever state a Christian finds himself or whatever his desire may be, he must exercise patience and guide his affairs with discretion. If in his department or field of work he wants promotion he should labour hard but honestly for it and be patient. It is impatience that sometimes makes some people jump from one department or trade to another and in the long run prove to be like the rolling stone that gathers no moss.

When one is sick one must have strong faith in God and also exercise patience in getting oneself healed. There are cases where because of impatience or not having the will to endure or suffer long people had swallowed all sorts of drugs-scientific, native and what have you – in mixed disorderly composition so as to get quick cure. But in some cases it had brought harmful effects or even fatal consequences. It is such a state of frenzy that drives some so-called Christians into compromising with witches and wizards and committing idolatry, thereby falling out of God's favour. – Deuteronomy 18: 10-14; Isaiah. 8: 19; 2 Kings 1: 1-4, 17, 18.

It is very good to be patient and to wait on God. It was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) who stated:

“Though the mills of God grind slowly,
yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting,
with exactness grinds he all.”

And the Psalmist said: “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace, and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.” – Psalm 27: 14; 84: 11, 12.

Trials

It is a show of lack of spiritual understanding and faith for anyone to forsake God just because he is in trouble. May be God allows the trouble to come in order to test or prove his faith, and so he needs to be patient. Hence James, the apostle, exhorted the Christians and said: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” – James 1:2-4.

The case of Job is a very good example to every Christian. The troubles that the devil brought upon him were many and they came in such quick succession that that wealthy man of God was reduced to destitution in a brief period of time. The Bible's account concerning Job's tribulations is pathetic. “And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

While the messenger was yet speaking another came to report that fire had consumed all the sheep and other servants of Job and he alone escaped. The second had not finished reporting when the third came to give an account about the loss of camels and yet other servants. The climax of this chain of tragic events came when the fourth messenger arrived while the third was yet speaking, and said: “Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” – Read Job 1: 13-19,

Although Job was touched by his sad experience, his faith in God sustained him. He did not curse God neither did he make any attempt on his own life as some would have done but rather he “fell down upon the ground, and worshipped (God)”. With fortitude he declared: “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” And the record adds: “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” – Job 1; 20-22,

As the tribulations of Job increased more and more his faithless and foolish wife said to him: “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die,” Job was not moved, and he rebuked her: “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Still in all this Job did not sin with his lip. – Job 2: 7-10,

Happy

Now, because of the faith and patience of Job his end was blessed. As it is written: “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels and a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters...And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.” – Job 42: 12-17.

St. James cited the patience of Job as an example for Christians to follow so that they may face their problems or difficulties with hope, patience and fortitude. Said he: “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” – James. 5: 10, 11.

Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour also set an example of enduring quietly under pain or annoyance for his followers to copy. Even though God Almighty gave him great power by which he could have subdued his enemies, he bore their reproaches with equanimity and endured his sufferings with patience in obedience to his Father’s will for the sake of sinful mankind. Exhorting the Christians, St. Paul stated: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” – Hebrews 12: 2, 3

And St. Peter said: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example,

that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” – 1 Peter 2: 19-24.

Promises

It is by patience we can wait for the fulfilment of the Lord's promises. The Christians in the apostolic age were admonished to be patient till the return of Christ. St. James wrote: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husband-man waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” – James. 5: 7, 8.

Whatever we want from God we should be patient and wait till His due time. But without patience we soon become tired and weak in His service and thereby fall away and miss His rich promises. The need to be zealous, hard-working, faithful and patient in God's service was stressed by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews. He stated: “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” – Hebrews 6: 11-15.

What is more, the apostle further exhorted: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” – Hebrews 10: 35, 36.