On Patience

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430)

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On Patience

[De Patientia.]
Translated by Rev. H. Browne, M.a. Of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; Late Principal of the Diocesan College, Chichester. Erasmus infers from the style and language of this piece, that it is not S. Augustin's, putting it in the same category with the treatises On Continence, On substance of Charity, On Faith of things invisible. The Benedictine editors acknowledge that it has peculiarities of style which are calculated to move suspicion; (especially the studied assonances and rhyming endings, e.g. "cautior fuit iste in doloribus quam ille in nemoribus . . . consensit ille oblectamentis, non cessit ille tormentis," chap. 12.); yet they feel themselves bound to retain it among the genuine works by Augustin's own testimony, who mentions both this piece and that On Continence in his Epistle to Darius, 231. chap. 7. [Vol. I. 584.] That it is not named in the Retractations is accounted for by the circumstance that it appears to have been delivered as a sermon, see chap. 1. and 3, and Augustin did not live to fulfill his intention of composing a further book of retractations on review of his popular discourses and letters. Ep. 224. chap. 2. In point of matter and doctrine this treatise has nothing contrary to or not in harmony with S. Augustin's known doctrine and sentiments.

1. That virtue of the mind which is called Patience, is so great a gift of God, that even in Him who bestoweth the same upon us, that, whereby He waiteth for evil men that they may amend, is set forth by the name of Patience, [or long-suffering.] So, although in God there can be no suffering, and "patience" hath its name a patiendo, from suffering, yet a patient God we not only faithfully believe, but also wholesomely confess. But the patience of God, of what kind and how great it is, His, Whom we say to be impassible, yet not impatient, nay even most patient, in words to unfold this who can be able? Ineffable is therefore that patience, as is His jealousy, as His wrath, and whatever there is like to these. For if we conceive of these as they be in us, in Him are there none. We, namely, can feel none of these without molestation: but be it far from us to surmise that the impassible nature of God is liable to any molestation. But like as He is jealous without any darkening of spirit, wroth without any perturbation, pitiful without any pain, repenteth Him without any wrongness in Him to be set right; so is He patient without aught of passion. Now therefore as concerning human patience, which we are able to conceive and beholden to

have, of what sort it is, I will, as God granteth and the brevity of the present discourse alloweth, essay to set forth.

2. The patience of man, which is right and laudable and worthy of the name of virtue, is understood to be that by which we tolerate evil things with an even mind, that we may not with a mind uneven desert good things, through which we may arrive at better. Wherefore the impatient, while they will not suffer ills, effect not a deliverance from ills, but only the suffering of heavier ills. Whereas the patient who choose rather by not committing to bear, than by not bearing to commit, evil, both make lighter what through patience they suffer, and also escape worse ills in which through impatience they would be sunk. But those good things which are great and eternal they lose not, while to the evils which be temporal and brief they yield not: because "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared," as the Apostle says, "with the future glory that shall be revealed in us." Add again he says, "This our temporal and light tribulation doth in inconceivable manner work for us an eternal weight of glory."

3. Look we then, beloved, what hardships in labors and sorrows men endure, for things which they viciously love, and by how much they think to be made by them more happy, by so much more unhappily covet. How much for false riches, how much for vain honors, how much for affections of games and shows, is of exceeding peril and trouble most patiently borne! We see men hankering after money, glory, lasciviousness, how, that they may arrive at their desires, and having gotten not lose them, they endure sun, rain, icy cold, waves, and most stormy tempests, the roughnesses and uncertainties of wars, the strokes of huge blows, and dreadful wounds, not of inevitable necessity but of culpable will. But these madnesses are thought, in a manner, permitted. Thus avarice, ambition, luxury, and the delights of all sorts of games and shows, unless for them some wicked deed be committed or outrage which is prohibited by human laws, are accounted to pertain to innocence: nay moreover, the man who without wrong to any shall, whether for getting or increasing of money, whether for obtaining or keeping of honors, whether in contending in the match, or in hunting, or in exhibiting with applause some theatrical spectacle, have borne great labors and pains, it is not enough that through popular vanity he is checked by no reproofs, but he is moreover extolled with praises: "Because," as it is written, "the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul." For the force of desires makes endurance of labors and pains: and no man save for that which he enjoyeth, freely takes on him to bear that which annoyeth. But these lusts, as I said, for the fulfilling of which they which are on fire with them most patiently endure much hardship and bitterness, are accounted to be permitted, and allowed by laws.

4. Nay more; for is it not so that even for open wickednesses, not to punish but to perpetrate them, men put up with many most grievous troubles? Do not authors of secular letters tell of a certain right noble parricide of his country, that hunger, thirst, cold, all these he was able to endure, and his body was patient of lack of food and warmth and sleep to a degree surpassing belief? Why speak of highway robbers, all of whom while they lie in wait for travellers endure whole nights without sleep, and that they may catch, as they pass by,

men who have no thought of harm, will, no matter how foul the weather, plant in one spot their mind and body, which are full of thoughts of harm? Nay it is said that some of them are wont to torture one another by turns, to that degree that this practice and training against pains is not a whit short of pains. For, not so much perchance are they excruciated by the Judge, that through smart of pain the truth may be got at, as they are by their own comrades, that through patience of pain truth may not be betrayed. And yet in all these the patience is rather to be wondered at than praised: nay neither wondered at nor praised, seeing it is no patience; but we must wonder at the hardness, deny the patience: for there is nothing in this rightly to be praised, nothing usefully to be imitated; and thou wilt rightly judge the mind to be all the more worthy of greater punishment, the more it yields up to vices the instruments of virtues. Patience is companion of wisdom, not handmaid of concupiscence: patience is the friend of a good conscience, not the foe of innocence.

5. When therefore thou shall see any man suffer aught patiently, do not straightway praise it as patience; for this is only shown by the cause of suffering. When it is a good cause, then is it true patience: when that is not polluted by lust, then is this distinguished from falsity. But when that is placed in crime, then is this much misplaced in name. For not just as all who know are partakers of knowledge, just so are all who suffer partakers of patience: but they which rightly use the suffering, these in verity of patience are praised, these with the prize of patience are crowned.

6. But yet, seeing that for lusts' sake, or even wickednesses, seeing, in a word, that for this temporal life and weal men do wonderfully bear the brunt of many horrible sufferings, they much admonish us how great things ought to be borne for the sake of a good life, that it may also hereafter be eternal life, and without any bound of time, without waste or loss of any advantage, in true felicity secure. The Lord saith, "In your patience ye shall possess your souls:" He saith not, your farms, your praises, your luxuries; but, "your souls." If then the soul endures so great sufferings that it may possess that whereby it may be lost, how great ought it to bear that it may not be lost? And then, to mention a thing not culpable, if it bear so great sufferings for saving of the flesh under the hands of chirurgeons cutting or burning the same, how great ought it to bear for saving of itself under the fury of any soever enemies? Seeing that leeches, that the body may not die, do by pains consult for the body's good; but enemies by threatening the body with pains and death, would urge us on to the slaying of soul and body in hell.

7. Though indeed the welfare even of the body is then more providently consulted for if its temporal life and welfare be disregarded for righteousness' sake, and its pain or death most patiently for righteousness' sake endured. Since it is of the body's redemption which is to be in the end, that the Apostle speaks, where he says, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting the adoption of sons, the redemption of our body." Then he subjoins, "For in hope are we saved. But hope which is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he also hope for? But if what we see not we hope for, we do by patience wait for it." When therefore any ills do torture us indeed, yet not extort from us ill works, not only is the soul

possessed through patience; but even when through patience the body itself for a time is afflicted or lost, it is unto eternal stability and salvation resumed, and hath through grief and death an inviolable health and happy immortality laid up for itself. Whence the Lord Jesus exhorting his Martyrs to patience, hath promised of the very body a future perfect entireness, without loss, I say not of any limb, but of a single hair. "Verily I say unto you," saith He, "a hair of your head shall not perish." That so, because, as the Apostle says, "no man ever hated his own flesh," a faithful man may more by patience than by impatience take vigilant care for the state of his flesh, and find amends for its present losses, how great soever they may be, in the inestimable gain of future incorruption.

8. But although patience be a virtue of the mind, yet partly the mind exercises it in the mind itself, partly in the body. In itself it exercises patience, when, the body remaining unhurt and untouched, the mind is goaded by any adversities or filthinesses of things or words, to do or to say something that is not expedient or not becoming, and patiently bears all evils that it may not itself commit any evil in work or word. By this patience we bear, even while we be sound in body, that in the midst of the offenses of this world our blessedness is deferred: of which is said what I cited a little before, "If what we see not we hope for, we do by patience wait for it. By this patience, holy David bore the revilings of a railer, and, when he might easily have avenged himself, not only did it not, but even refrained another who was vexed and moved for him; and more put forth his kingly power by prohibiting than by exercising vengeance. Nor at that time was his body afflicted with any disease or wound, but there was an acknowledging of a time of humility, and a bearing of the will of God, for the sake of which there was a drinking of the bitterness of contumely with most patient mind.

This patience the Lord taught, when, the servants being moved at the mixing in of the tares and wishing to gather them up, He said that the householder answered, "Leave both to grow until the harvest. That, namely, must be patience put up with, which must not be in haste put away. Of this patience Himself afforded and showed an example, when, before the passion of His Body, He so bore with His disciple Judas, that ere He pointed him out as the traitor, He endured him as a thief; and before experience of bonds and cross and death, did, to those lips so full of guile, not deny the kiss of peace. All these, and whatever else there be, which it were tedious to rehearse, belong to that manner of patience, by which the mind doth, not its own sins but any evils so ever from without, patiently endure in itself, while the body remains altogether unhurt. But the other manner of patience is that by which the same mind bears any troubles and grievances whatsoever in the sufferings of the body; not as do foolish or wicked men for the sake of getting vain things or perpetrating crimes; but as is defined by the Lord, "for righteousness' sake. In both kinds, the holy Martyrs contended. For both with scornful reproofs of the ungodly were they filled, where, the body remaining intact, the mind hath its own (as it were) blows and wounds, and bears these unbroken:

and in their bodies they were bound, imprisoned, vexed with hunger and thirst, tortured, gashed, torn asunder, burned, butchered; and with piety immovable submitted unto God

their mind, while they were suffering in the flesh all that exquisite cruelty could devise in its mind.

9. It is indeed a greater fight of patience, when it is not a visible enemy that by persecution and rage would urge us into crime which enemy may openly and in broad day be by not consenting overcome; but the devil himself, (he who doth likewise by means of the children of infidelity, as by his vessels, persecute the children of light) doth by himself hiddenly attack us, by his rage putting us on to do or say something against God. As such had holy Job experience of him, by both temptations vexed, but in both through steadfast strength of patience and arms of piety unconquered. For first, his body being left unhurt, he lost all that he had, in order that the mind, before excruciation of the flesh, might through withdrawal of the things which men are wont to prize highly, be broken, and he might say something against God upon loss of the things for the sake of which he was thought to worship Him. He was smitten also with sudden bereavement of all his sons so that whom he had begotten one by one he should lose all at once, as though their numerousness had been not for the adorning of his felicity, but for the increasing of his calamity. But where, having endured these things, he remained immovable in his God, he cleaved to His will, Whom it was not possible to lose but by his own will;

and in place of the things he had lost he held Him who took them away, in Whom he should find what should never be lost. For He that took them away was not that enemy who had will of hurting, but He who had given to that enemy the power of hurting. The enemy next attacked also the body, and now not those things which were in the man from without, but the man himself, in whatever part he could, he smote. From the head to the feet were burning pains, were crawling worms, were running sores; still in the rotting body the mind remained entire, and horrid as were the tortures of the consuming flesh, with inviolate piety and uncorrupted patience it endured them all. There stood the wife, and instead of giving her husband any help, was suggesting blasphemy against God. For we are not to think that the devil, in leaving her when he took away the sons, went to work as one unskilled in mischief: rather, how necessary she was to the tempter, he had already learned in Eve. But now he had not found a second Adam whom he might take by means of a woman. More cautious was Job in his hours of sadness, than Adam in his bowers of gladness, the one was overcome in the midst of pleasant things, the otherovercame in the midst of pains; the one consented to that which seemed delightsome, this other quailed not in torments most affrightsome.

There stood his friends too, not to console him in his evils, but to suspect evil in him. For while he suffered so great sorrows, they believed him not innocent, nor did their tongue forbear to say that which his conscience had not to say; that so amid ruthless tortures of the body, his mind also might be beaten with truthless reproaches. But he, bearing in his flesh his own pains, in his heart others' errors, reproved his wife for her folly, taught his friends wisdom, preserved patience in each and all.

10. To this man let them look who put themselves to death when they are sought for to have life put upon them; and by bereaving themselves of the present, deny and refuse also that which is to come. Why, if people were driving them to deny Christ or to do any thing contrary to righteousness, like true Martyrs, they ought rather to bear all patiently than to dare death impatiently. If it could be right to do this for the sake of running away from evils, holy Job would have killed himself, that being in so great evils, in his estate, in his sons, in his limbs, through the devil's cruelty, he might escape them all. But he did it not. Far be it from him, a wise man, to commit upon himself what not even that unwise woman suggested. And if she had suggested it, she would with good reason here also have had that answer which she had when suggesting blasphemy; "Thou hast spoken as one of the foolish women. If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, shall we not bear evil? Seeing even he also would have lost patience, if either by blasphemy as she had suggested, or by killing himself which not even she had dared to speak of, he should die, and be among them of whom it is written, "Woe unto them that have lost patience!

and rather increase than escape pains, if after the death of his body he should be hurried off to punishment either of blasphemers, or of murderers, or of them which are worse even than parricides. For if a parricide be on that account more wicked than any homicide, because he kills not merely a man but a near relative; and among parricides too, the nearer the person killed, the greater criminal he is judged to be: without doubt worse still is he who kills himself, because there is none nearer to a man than himself. What then do these miserable persons mean, who, though both here they have inflicted pain upon themselves, and hereafter not only for their impiety towards God but for the very cruelty which they have exercised upon themselves will deservedly suffer pains of His inflicting, do yet seek moreover the glories of Martyrs? since, even if for the true testimony of Christ they suffered persecution, and killed themselves, that they might not suffer any thing from their persecutors, it would be rightly said to them, "Woe unto them which have lost patience! For how hath patience her just reward, if even an impatient suffering receives the crown? or how shall that man be judged innocent, to whom is said, "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself," if he commit murder upon himself which he is forbidden to commit upon his neighbor?

11. Let then the Saints hear from holy Scripture the precepts of patience: "My son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand thou in righteousness and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation: bring thine heart low, and bear up; that in the last end thy life may increase. All that shall come upon thee receive thou, and in pain bear up, and in thy humility have patience. For in the fire gold and silver is proved, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." And in another place we read: "My son, faint not thou in the discipline of the Lord, neither be wearied when thou art chidden of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." What is here set down, "son whom He receiveth," the same in the above mentioned testimony is, "acceptable men." For this is just, that we who from our first felicity of Paradise for contumacious appetence of things to enjoy were dismissed, through humble patience of things that annoy may be received back:

driven away for doing evil, brought back by suffering evil: there against righteousness doing ill, here for righteousness' sake patient of ills.

12. But concerning true patience, worthy of the name of this virtue, whence it is to be had, must now be inquired. For there are somé who attribute it to the strength of the human will, not which it hath by Divine assistance, but which it hath of free-will. Now this error is a proud one: for it is the error of them which abound, of whom it is said in the Psalm, "A scornful reproof to them which abound, and a despising to the proud. It is not therefore that "patience of the poor" which "perisheth not forever. For these poor receive it from that Rich One, to Whom is said, "My God art Thou, because my goods Thou needest not: of Whom is "every good gift, and every perfect gift; to Whom crieth the needy and the poor, and in asking, seeking, knocking, saith, "My God, deliver me from the hand of the sinner, and from the hand of the lawless and unjust: because Thou art my patience, O Lord, my hope from my youth up. But these which abound, and disdain to be in want before God, lest they receive of Him true patience, they which glory in their own false patience, seek to "confound the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his hope. Nor do they regard, seeing they are men, and attribute so much to their own, that is, to the human will, that they run into that which is written, "Cursed is every one who putteth his hope in man.

Whence even if it chance them that they do bear up under any hardships or difficulties, either that they may not displease men, or that they may not suffer worse, or in self-pleasing and love of their own presumption, do with most proud will bear up under these same, it is meet that concerning patience this be said unto them, which concerning wisdom the blessed Apostle James saith, "This wisdom cometh not from above, but is earthly, animal, devilish. For why may there not be a false patience of the proud, as there is a false wisdom of the proud? But from Whom cometh true wisdom, from Him cometh also true patience. For to Him singeth that poor in spirit, "Unto God is my soul subjected, because from Him is my patience."

13. But they answer and speak, saying, "If the will of man without any aid of God by strength of free choice bears so many grievous and horrible distresses, whether in mind or body, that it may enjoy the delight of this mortal life and of sins, why may it not be that in the same manner the self-same will of man by the same strength of free-choice, not thereunto looking to be aided of God, but unto itself by natural possibility sufficing, doth, in all of labor or sorrow that is put upon it, for righteousness and eternal life's sake most patiently sustain the same? Or is it so, say they, that the will of the unjust is sufficient, without aid of God, for them, yea even to exercise themselves in undergoing torture for iniquity, and before they be tortured by others; sufficient the will of them which love the respiting of this life that, without aid of God, they should in the midst of most atrocious and protracted torments persevere in a lie, lest confessing their misdeeds they be ordered to be put to death; and not sufficient the will of the just, unless strength be put into them from above, that whatever be their pains, they should, either for beauty's sake of very righteousness or for love of eternal life, bear the same?"

14. They which say these things, do not understand that as well each one of the wicked is in that measure for endurance of any ills more hard, in what measure the lust of the world is mightier in him; as also that each one of the just is in that measure for endurance of any ills more brave, in what measure in him the love of God is mightier. But lust of the world hath its beginning from choice of the will, its progress from enjoyableness of pleasure, its confirmation from the chain of custom, whereas "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," not verily from ourselves, but" by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. And therefore from Him cometh the patience of the just, by Whom is shed abroad their love (of Him). Which love (of charity) the Apostle praising and setting off, among its other good qualities, saith, that it "beareth all things. "Charity," saith he, "is magnanimous. And a little after he saith, "endureth all things. The greater then is in saints the charity (or love) of God, the more do they endure all things for Him whom they love, and the greater in sinners the lust of the world, the more do they endure all things for that which they lust after And consequently from that same source cometh true patience of the righteous, from which there is in them the love of God;

and from that same source the false patience of the unrighteous, from which is in them the lust of the world. With regard to which the Apostle John saith; "Love not the world,neither the things that be in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: because all that is in the world, is lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes, and pride of life; which is not of the Father, but is of the world. This concupiscence, then, which is not of the Father, but is of the world, in what measure it shall in any man be more vehement and ardent, in that measure becometh each more patient of all troubles and sorrows for that which he lusteth after. Therefore, as we said above, this is not the patience which descendeth from above, but the patience of the godly is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. And so that is earthly, this heavenly; that animal, this spiritual; that devilish, this Godlike. Because concupiscence, whereof it cometh that persons sinning suffer all things stubbornly, is of the world; but charity, whereof cometh that persons living aright suffer all things bravely, is of God. And therefore to that false patience it is possible that, without aid of God, the human will may suffice; harder, in proportion as it is more eager of lust, and bearing ills with the more endurance the worse itself becometh:

while to this, which is true patience, the human will, unless aided and inflamed from above, doth not suffice, for the very reason that the Holy Spirit is the fire thereof; by Whom unless it be kindled to love that impassible Good, it is not able to bear the ill which it suffereth.

15. For, as the Divine utterances testify, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him." Whoso therefore contends that love of God may be had without aid of God, what else does he contend, but that God may be had without God? Now what Christian would say this, which no madman would venture to say? Therefore in the Apostle, true, pious, faithful patience, saith exultingly, and by the mouth of the Saints; "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed

all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us:" not through ourselves, but, "through Him that loved us." And then he goes on and adds; "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is that "love of God" which "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." But the concupiscence of the bad, by reason of which there is in them a false patience, "is not of the Father," as saith the Apostle John, but is of the world.

16. Here some man shall say; "If the concupiscence of the bad, whereby it comes that they bear all evils for that which they lust after, be of the world, how is it said to be of their will?" As if, truly, they were not themselves also of the world, when they love the world, forsaking Him by Whom the world was made. For "they serve the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever." Whether then by the word "world," the Apostle John signifies lovers of the world, the will, as it is of themselves, is therefore of the world: or whether under the name of the world he comprises heaven and earth, and all that is therein, that is the creature universally, it is plain that the will of the creature, not being that of the Creator, is of the world. For which cause to such the Lord saith, "Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world, I am not of this world." And to the Apostle He saith, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." But lest they should arrogate more unto them selves than their measure craved, and whenHe said that they were not of the world, should imagine this to be of nature, not of grace, therefore He saith, "But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." It follows, that they once were of the world: for, that they might not be of the world, they were chosen out of the world.

17. Now this election the Apostle demonstrating to be, not of merits going before in good works, but election of grace, saith thus: "And in this time a remnant by election of grace is saved. But if by grace, then is itno more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. This is election of grace; that is, election in which through the grace of God men are elected: this, I say, is election of grace which goes before all good merits of men. For if it be to any good merits that it is given, then is it no more gratuitously given, but is paid as a debt, and consequently is not truly called grace; where "reward," as the same Apostle saith, "is not imputed as grace, but as debt. Whereas if, that it may be true grace, that is, gratuitous, it find nothing inman to which it is due of merit, (which thing is well understood in that saying, "Thou wiltsave them for nothing,") then assuredly itself gives the merits, not to merits is given. Consequently it goes before even faith, from which it is that all good works begin. "For the just," as is written, "shall live by faith. But, moreover, grace not only assists the just, but also justifies the ungodly. And therefore even when it does aid the just and seems to be rendered to his merits, not even then does it cease to be grace, because that which it aids it did itself bestow.

With a view therefore to this grace, which precedes all good merits of man, not only was Christ put to death by the ungodly, but "died for the ungodly. And ere that He died, He elected the Apostles, not of course then just, but to be justified: to whom He saith, "I have chosen you out of the world. For to whom He said, "Ye are not of the world," and then, lest they should account themselves never to have been of the world, presently added, "But I have chosen you out of the world; assuredly that they should not be of the world was by His own election of them conferred upon them. Wherefore, if it had been through their own righteousness, not through His grace, that they were elected, they would not have been chosen out of the world, because they would already not be of the world if already they were just. And again, if the reason why they were elected was, that they were already just, they had already first chosen the Lord. For who can be righteous but by choosing righteousness? "But the end of the law is Christ, for righteousness is to every one that believeth. Who is made unto us wisdom of God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. He then is Himself our righteousness.

18. Whence also the just of old, before the Incarnation of the Word, in this faith of Christ, and in this true righteousness, (which thing Christ is unto us,) were justified; believing this to come which we believe come: and they themselves by grace were saved through faith, not of themselves, but by the gift of God, not of works, lest haply they should be lifted up. For their good works did not come before God's mercy, but followed it. For to them was it said, and by them written, long ere Christ was come in the flesh, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will show compassion on whom I will have compassion." From which words of God the Apostle Paul, should So long after say; "It is not therefore of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It is also their own voice, long ere Christ was come in the flesh, "My God, His mercy shall prevent me." How indeed could they be aliens from the faith of Christ, by whose charity even Christ was fore-announced unto us; without the faith of Whom, not any of mortals either hath been, or is, or ever shall be able to be, righteous? if then, being already just, the Apostles were elected by Christ, they would have first chosen Him, that just men might be chosen, because without Him they could not be just. But it was not so: as Himself saith to them, "Not ye have chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Of which the Apostle John speaks, "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

19. Since the case is so, what is man, while in this life he uses his own proper will, ere he choose and love God, but unrighteous and ungodly? "What," I say," is man," a creature going astray from the Creator, unless his Creator "be mindful of him," and choose him freely, and love him freely? Because he is himself not able to choose or love, unless being first chosen and loved he be healed, because by choosing blindness he perceiveth not, and by loving laziness is soon wearied. But perchance some man may say: In what manner is it that God first chooses and loves unjust men, that He may justify them, when it is written, "Thou hatest, Lord, all that work iniquity?" In what way, think we, but in a wonderful and ineffable

manner? And yet even we are able to conceive, that the good Physician both hates and loves the sick man: hates him, because he is sick; loves him, that he may drive away his sickness.

20. Let thus much have been said with regard to charity, without which in us there cannot be true patience, because in good men it is the love of God which endureth all things, as in bad men the lust of the world. Butthis love is in us by the Holy Spirit which was given us. Whence, of Whom cometh in us love, of Him cometh patience. But the lust of the world, when it patiently bears the burdens of any manner of calamity, boasts of thestrength of its own will, like as of the stuporof disease, not robustness of health. Thisboasting is insane: it is not the language ofpatience, but of dotage. A will like this in that degree seems more patient of bitter ills, in which it is more greedy of temporal goodthings, because more empty of eternal.

21. But if it be goaded on and inflamed with deceitful visions and unclean incentives by the devilish spirit, associated and conspiring therewith in malignant agreement, this spirit makes the will of the man either franticwith error, or burning with appetite of some worldly delight; and hence, it seems to show a marvellous endurance of intolerable evils: but yet it does not follow from this that an evil will without instigation of another and unclean spirit, like as a good will without aidof the Holy Spirit, cannot exist. For that there may be an evil will even without any spirit either seducing or inciting, is sufficiently clear in the instance of the devil himself, who is found to have become a devil, not through some other devil, but of his own proper will. An evil will therefore, whether it be hurried on by lush whether called back by fear, whether expanded by gladness, whether contracted by sadness, and in all these perturbations of mind enduring and baking light of whatever are to others, or at another time, more grievous, this evil will may, without another spirit to goad it on, seduce itself, and in lapsing by defection from the higher to the lower, the more pleasant it shall account that thing to be which it seeks to get or fears to lose, or rejoices to have gotten, or grieves to have lost, the more tolerably for its sake bear what is less for it to suffer than that is to be enjoyed. For whatever that thing be, it is of the creature, of which one knows the pleasure. Because in some sort, the creature loved approaches itself to the creature loving in fond contact and connection, to the giving experience of its sweetness.

22. But the pleasure of the Creator, of which is written, ”And from the river of Thy pleasure wilt Thou give them to drink,” is of far other kind, for it is not, like us, a creature. Unless then its love be given to us from thence there is no source whence it may be in us. And consequently, a good will, by which we love God, cannot be in man, save in whom God also worketh to will. This good will therefore, that is, a will faithfully subjected to God, a will set on fire by sanctity of that ardor which is above, a will which loves God and his neighbor for God’s sake; whether through love, of which the Apostle Peter makes answer, ”Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee; whether through fear, of which says the Apostle Paul, ”In fear and trembling work out your own salvation; whether through joy, of which he says, ”In hope rejoicing, in tribulation patient; whether through sorrow, with which he says he had great grief for his brethren; in whatever way it endure what bitterness and hardships soever, it

is the love of God which "endureth all things," and which is not shed abroad in our hearts but by the Holy Spirit given unto us. Whereof piety makes no manner of doubt, but, as the charity of them which holily love, so the patience of them which piously endure, is the gift of God.

For it cannot be that the divine Scripture deceiveth or is deceived, which not only in the Old Books hath testimonies of this thing, when it is said unto God, "My Patience art Thou," and, "From Him is my patience; and where another prophet saith, that we receive the spirit of fortitude; but also in the Apostolic writings we read, "Because unto you is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for Him. Therefore let not that make the mind to be as of its own merit uplifted, wherewith he is told that he is of Another's mercy gifted.

23. But if moreover any not having charity, which pertaineth to the unity of spirit and the bond of peace whereby the Catholic Church is gathered and knit together, being involved in any schism, doth, that he may not deny Christ, suffer tribulations, straits, hunger, nakedness, persecution, perils, prisons, bonds, torments, swords, or flames, or wild beasts, or the very cross, through fear of hell and everlasting fire; in nowise is all this to be blamed, nay rather this also is a patience meet to be praised. For we cannot say that it would have been better for him that by denying Christ he should suffer none of these things, which he did suffer by confessing Him: but we must account that it will perhaps be more tolerable for him in the judgment, than if by denying Christ he should avoid all those things: so that what the Apostle saith, "If I shall give my body to be burned, but have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," should be understood to profit nothing for obtaining the kingdom of heaven, but not for having more tolerable punishment to undergo in the last judgment.

24. But it may well be asked, whether this patience likewise be the gift of God, or to be attributed to strength of the human will, by which patience, one who is separated from the Church doth, not for the error which separated him but for the truth of the Sacrament or Word which hath remained with him, for fear of pains eternal suffer pains temporal. For we must take heed lest haply, if we affirm that patience to be the gift of God, they in whom it is should be thought to belong also to the kingdom of God; but if we deny it to be the gift of God, we should be compelled to allow that without aid and gift of God there can be in the will of man somewhat of good. Because it is not to be denied that it is a good thing that a man believe he shall undergo pain of eternal punishment if he shall deny Christ, and for that faith endure and make light of any manner of punishment of man's inflicting.

25. So then, as we are not to deny that this is the gift of God, we are thus to understand that there be some gifts of God possessed by the sons of that Jerusalem which is above, and free, and mother of us all, (for these are in some sort the hereditary possessions in which we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ:") but some other which may be received even by the sons of concubines to whom carnal Jews and schismatics or heretics are compared. For though it be written, "Cast out the bondmaid and her son, for the son of the bondmaid shall not be heir with my son Isaac: and though God said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed

be called: which the Apostle hath so interpreted as to say, "That is, not they which be sons of the flesh, these be the sons of God; but the sons of the promise are counted for the seed; that we might understand the seed of Abraham in regard of Christ to pertain by reason of Christ to the sons of God, who are Christ's body and members, that is to say, the Church of God, one, true, very-begotten, catholic, holding the godly faith; not the faith which works through elation or fear, but "which worketh by love;

" nevertheless, even the sons of the concubines, when Abraham sent them away from his son Isaac, he did not omit to bestow upon them some gifts, that they might not be left in every way empty, but not that they should be held as heirs. For so we read: "And Abraham gave all his estate unto Isaac; and to the sons of his concubines gave Abraham gifts, and sent them away from his son Isaac. If then we be sons of Jerusalem the free, let us understated that other be the gifts of them which are put out of the inheritance, other the gifts of them which be heirs. For these be the heirs, to whom is said, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

26. Cry we therefore with the spirit of charity, and until we come to the inheritance in which we are alway to remain, let us be, through love which becometh the free-born, not through fear which becometh bondmen, patient of suffering. Cry we, so long as we are poor, until we be with that inheritance made rich. Seeing how great earnest thereof we have received, in that Christ to make us rich made Himself poor; Who being exalted unto the riches which are above, there was sent One Who should breathe into our hearts holy longings, the Holy Spirit. Of these poor, as yet believing, not yet beholding; as yet hoping, not yet enjoying; as yet sighing in desire, not yet reigning in felicity; as yet hungering and thirsting, not yet satisfied: of these poor. then, "the patience shall not perish for ever: not that there will be patience there also, where aught to endure shall not be; but "will not perish," meaning that it will not be unfruitful. But its fruit it will have for ever, therefore it "shall not perish for ever. For he who labors in vain, when his hope fails for which he labored, says with good cause, "I have lost so much labor: but he who comes to the promise of his labor says, congratulating himself, I have not lost my labor. Labor then is said not to perish (or be lost), not because it lasts perpetually, but because it is not spent in vain.

So also the patience of the poor of Christ (who yet are to be made rich as heirs of Christ) shall not perish for ever: not because there also we shall be commanded patiently to bear, but because for that which we have here patiently borne, we shall enjoy eternal bliss. He will put no end to everlasting felicity, Who giveth temporal patience unto the will: because both the one and the other is of Him bestowed as a gift upon charity, Whose gift that charity is also.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and

Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.