

Patience and Her Perfect Work

by J.C. Philpot

J.C. Philpot's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of patience through trials, leading to spiritual maturity and joy in the Christian life.

Scripture: Exodus 15:26, Job 23:10, Psalm 103:3, John 4:14, Romans 4:18, Ephesians 1:11, Hebrews 12:11, James 1:2
Topics: "Christian Perseverance", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the importance of enduring diverse temptations with joy, as they work to strengthen faith and produce patience in believers. He compares the futile search of alchemists for a universal medicine, elixir of life, and philosopher's stone to the true miraculous solutions found in the gospel through the precious blood of Christ, the living water He offers, and His grace that transforms afflictions into blessings. Philpot delves into the various trials and temptations believers face from different sources, emphasizing the need for submission to God's will and the perfect work of patience to mature and lack nothing in the Christian walk.

Transcript

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, Jan. 9, 1850, by J. C. Philpot

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4

A singular race of men lived in the middle ages called Alchemists--a name still retained in the words "chemist" and "chemistry"--who spent their money, broke their spirits, and wasted their lives in a most unwearied search after three things--First, a medicine that would cure all diseases, which they termed a "panacea;" secondly, a tincture, or, to use their language, an "elixir vitac," that would prolong life to an indefinite period; and thirdly, a powder, styled the "philosopher's stone," which would transmute lead and other base metals into gold. I need not tell you that all their laborious researches, which they pursued for several centuries, were utterly fruitless, and that as far as any satisfactory result was obtained, they might as well have tried to spin ropes out of sand, weave stockings out of gossamer threads, or twist clouds into

ladders to reach the moon. Had they even succeeded, the results would have been full of vexation and disappointment. If they could have found a medicine to cure all diseases, would that have staved off old age and its attendant infirmities? If they could have prolonged life to an indefinite period, would not the grave sooner or later have closed over its victim? And if they could have changed tons of lead into gold, either the expense of the process would have swallowed up all the profits, or the abundance obtained by a cheap manufacture would of itself have destroyed its value when made.

But what they could not find in chemistry, is to be found in the gospel. Nature, however tortured in the furnace, could work no such miracle as they sought to wrest from her bosom; but grace freely and without constraint has worked and still daily works them. There is a medicine which in the hands of Jehovah-ropi, the great Physician Ex 15:26, cures all diseases and dispels all complaints. As David speaks--"Who heals all your diseases," Ps 103:3 And what is this "panacea?" The precious blood of Christ, which "cleanses from all sin." Is not sin a disease? And if this precious blood cleanse from all sin, must it not be a universal medicine, and all the more valuable as curing soul disease, which must be infinitely more deadly and destructive than any bodily malady? Disease struck down the alchemist amid his extracts and essences, and with all the more deadly stroke from his sacrificing his own health in the vain attempt to cure other's sickness. But our blessed Physician has not only revealed and brought to light an infallible medicine, but himself applies it with his own hands and makes it effectual to a perfect cure. And is there not in the same blessed Jesus the true miraculous panacea of life? What did he say to the woman of Samaria? "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Joh 4:14.

The alchemist only sought to add a few more years to human life; but Jesus gives life for evermore. And is not his grace the true "philosopher's stone," transmuting by miraculous agency leaden afflictions into golden consolations, earthly miseries into heavenly mercies, legal curses into gospel blessings, and vile sinners into precious saints? Thus the delusive dreams of the alchemists have become solid realities, and as far exceeding what they toiled and toiled in vain to find, as eternity excels time, and heaven surpasses earth.

One of these miracles of grace we find in our text--"My brethren," says James, "count it all joy when you fall into temptations." What a miracle must that be when a man can take into his hands a load of temptations and trials, and, by an act of faith, transmute them into joy! If you could take up a piece of lead, and by putting a powder upon it and holding it for a few minutes in a furnace, change it into a solid lump of gold, would that be a greater miracle than turning light afflictions into an eternal weight of glory? How this is done we shall, I hope, with God's blessing, see from the words of our text, in opening up which I shall direct your minds to four leading features which seem to me stamped upon them:

I. First, the "diverse temptations" into which the people of God "fall."

II. Secondly, the effect of falling into diverse temptations--that it tries faith, and that "the trying of faith works patience."

III. Thirdly, the apostolic counsel, "Let patience have her perfect work," that the saint of God "may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

IV. Fourthly, the transmuting effect of grace enabling the tried and tempted family of God to "count it all joy" when they fall into diverse temptations.

I. The "diverse trials and temptations" into which the people of God "fall."

I must, however, with God's blessings, before I plunge into my subject, attempt to explain as plainly and as concisely as I can the precise meaning of several words in our text, that we may have a clearer view of the mind and meaning of the Holy Spirit in the passage before us.

The word translated "temptations," embraces in the original a wider field of experience than the English term conveys. We must, therefore, enlarge the idea so as to embrace "trials" also; for the original word means not merely "temptations," but includes also what we understand by the term "trials." We must also further enlarge the meaning of the word "diverse;" for the term in the original means not only diversified, various, of different kinds, but also many in number. So that we may thus enlarge our text, in perfect consistency with the mind of the Holy Spirit--"Count it all joy when you fall into many and various trials and temptations." Thus we see that the words in this enlarged sense comprehend all the trials and all the temptations, however numerous, however diversified, that the saints of God may fall into. Were it otherwise, were the text at all restricted, it would not apply to all the living family of God. Unless, for instance, it comprehended every trial, it might not comprehend your trial; unless it included every kind of temptation, it might not include your peculiar temptation; and thus you as well as many who are deeply tried and peculiarly tempted, might be shut out of all the benefit and blessing contained in it.

I must also drop a word of explanation on the expression "fall into," for there is something very significant in the idea conveyed by it. The idea is of a sudden fall into an unexpected danger, as, for instance, of a traveler falling into an ambush of robbers; for the Lord uses exactly the same word when he speaks in the parable of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and "fell among thieves." Lu 10:30. He was journeying onward, as he thought, safely; but all of a sudden, he fell into an ambush of thieves, who surrounded him, stripped him, wounded him, and left him half dead. Or the expression may refer to the idea of a ship steering its onward course with apparent safety, and suddenly striking on a reef of rocks, or caught in a whirlpool, for we have the same exact word used of the ship which conveyed Paul to Italy; "And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground." Ac 27:41. Thus the word "fall into" diverse temptations has a peculiar significance, as expressing to the very life the way in which the saints of God often most suddenly and unexpectedly fall into the numerous and various temptation and trials which lie as if in the ambush as so many robbers, or lurk unseen as rocks and quicksands in the voyage of life. For you will bear in mind that the saint of God is both a traveler and a voyager. He has a way to tread, a road to travel in--the strait and narrow way, that leads to eternal life; and he has a voyage to make, for--"The Christian navigates a sea, Where various forms of death appear;" and it is "those that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in deep waters, who see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep." Ps 107:23-24. The road in itself is rough and rugged, and the sea stormy and boisterous; but it is the perils of the way--"The rocks and quicksands deep. That through the passage lie"--in other words, the trials and temptations spread through the course, which make the journey and the voyage so difficult and so dangerous.

But let us look at some of these dangers and perils, these "diverse TRIALS" into which the family of God fall. Well may they be called "diverse," or many and various, as we have explained the word, for they spring from such numerous and different sources; but I shall only name four.

1. From above;
2. from beneath;

3. from without;

4. from within.

1. Some are from ABOVE. "The Lord," we are expressly told, "tries the righteous." "Search me, O God, and know my heart," says the Psalmist; "try me, and know my thoughts." The trials with which God himself tries his people are not only numerous and various, but for the most part of a very painful and perplexing nature, yet all precisely adapted to the nature of the case and exactly suited to the state of the person tried, as being planned by unerring wisdom, and weighed, measured, and timed by infinite love. Thus, as the God of providence, as the Maker of our bodies as well as the Creator of our souls, as the God of our families who gives and takes at will the fruit of the womb, some of his children he tries with poverty, others with sickness, others with taking away the desire of their eyes at a stroke, or cutting off the tender olive plants which have sprung up round about their table and twined round every fiber of their heart.

How sudden also, how unexpected the trials! Heavy losses in business, deprivation of a situation, a sweeping away of the little all--the savings of a life--by some fraud or failure, trick or treachery, riches making themselves wings and flying away, and poverty and need coming in as an armed man to plunder the wreck; how suddenly do such strokes come! Sickness, also, and disease, how swift their attack! We are at present in a very sickly season. Illness surrounds us on every side. New complaints, such as the fearful disease diphtheria, or revived maladies as small pox, are spreading far and wide, and making all tremble for themselves or their families; Both these diseases were then very prevalent, and as the saints of God are not exempt from their share in these afflictions, many who fear his great name are either themselves stretched on beds of languishing and pain, or are watching by the side of afflicted relatives and dying children. How suddenly, also, trials of various kind come! In one day Job, "the greatest of all the men of east," lost all the substance which God had given; and the father in the morning of ten living children sat in the evening in his lonely house childless and desolate. How labor pangs fell suddenly on Rachel, and the impatient mother who had cried out "Give me children or else I die," expired under the load of her coveted burden!

But these and all other temporal trials, though at times very severe to the flesh--though they need much grace to endure them with patience and submission--though often aggravated by our own fretfulness, and used as weapons by unbelief and Satan acutely to distress the mind; yet are they of little real significance when compared with SPIRITUAL TRIALS which sink deep into a man's very soul. These, then, are the sharpest trials among those which come from above. And among them we may place as the keenest of all the hidings of God's face, as a mark of his displeasure. How David, Heman, Jeremiah, Jonah, and other Bible saints mourned and lamented under these hidings of the Lord's countenance--"You hid your face and I was troubled." Ps 30:7. "Lord, why do you cast off my soul? why do you hide your face from me?" Ps 88:14. To a saint of God, who has ever experienced the lifting up of the light of the Lord's countenance, nothing is more painful and trying than the Lord hiding his face; for then all his comfort withers--his very evidence appear gone--the former tokens for good are surrounded with a dark cloud, and the felt displeasure of the Lord seems more than he can bear. But the blessed Lord himself drank of this bitter cup when he cried out--"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And we must suffer with him if we are to be glorified together.

But the Lord also "tries the righteous" by laying bare, and thus discovering to them the secret iniquities of the heart. It was so with Hezekiah, of whom we read--"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." 2Ch 32:31. So the

Lord, to strip us of our own pride--to crush our vain confidence--to show us that all our strength is weakness, and that grace must freely sanctify as well as fully save, subdue sin as well as pardon it--often leaves us to the discovery of what we are in the Adam-fall. This is "searching Jerusalem with candles" Zep 2:12; for "the spirit of man," that is the new man of grace, "is the candle or lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the heart." Pr 20:27. "I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins." Jer 17:10.

As, then, "in his light we see light," and "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light" Ps 36:9 Eph 5:13, sin after sin becomes discovered; and the teaching of the Spirit making the heart soft and the conscience tender, the soul is painfully and acutely tried by seeing and feeling these inward abominations. How markedly we see this in Job! "When he has tried me," said he, "I shall come forth as gold" Job 23:10; but in the furnace what a discovery was made of the corruptions of his heart, which before were to himself unsuspected and unknown! They had not escaped the searching eye of Omniscience; but they had much escaped the eye of the most perfect and upright man, according to God's own testimony, who then dwelt upon the earth. When, however this eminent saint of God was tried by afflictions and desertions, pain of body and agony of mind, then the deep and foul corruptions of his heart become manifest, and the most rebellious and unbecoming expressions found vent through his lips. You may think harshly of Job; but the greatest saint, the most highly favored Christian put into the same furnace, would behave no better than he. If the Lord lay "his left hand under the head," the sharpest temporal trials can be patiently, even gladly borne. All afflictions become light if "his right hand embrace" the soul. So 2:6. But if he withdraw his presence, shut out prayer, withhold the light of his countenance, and leave us to the workings of our corrupt heart, what can be the outcome but fretfulness and rebellion, murmuring thoughts, unbelief, and self-pity?

2. Other trials of God's saints are from BENEATH. We cannot explain the deep mystery why the Lord should allow Satan to retain such power after Jesus bruised his head so effectually upon the cross, after he led captivity captive, and spoiled principalities and powers, casting them down from their seat of eminence, and making a show of them openly. That Satan should still be allowed to exercise such sway in this lower world, and even exercise his power against the saints who are dear to Christ as the apple of his eye--surely, this is a mystery we cannot now fathom. But we know the fact from the authority of Scripture, the testimony of the saints, and our own personal experience, that the Lord does, for his own wise purposes, permit Satan very much to harass and distress the soul's of God's people. There is also this peculiarity in the temptations of Satan, that as he works by them on our carnal mind, we cannot often distinguish them from the sins of our own heart. We see this in Satan's tempting David to number the people, and as strikingly in the passionate exclamations of Job. These good men did not see the tempter, though his hot breath inflamed their mind. As in a forge or foundry, the blazing coals or molten iron are seen, but not the hidden tube through whose sustained blast "the melting fire burns;" so many a vile thought, infidel suggestion, or horrible idea blaze up in the heart, blown into a flame through the black tube of the Prince of darkness.

3. Other trials, again, arise from WITHOUT. There are few saints of God who in their passage through life have not had to suffer much from outward foes. Open persecution assails some; secret slander and misrepresentation attack the character and wound the mind of others. Their best friends, as they once thought them, have sometimes proved the most cruel enemies. Where they expected nothing but sympathy and kindness, they have met with little but harshness and neglect. How acutely Job felt this when he complained, "To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend." But instead of pity, his "brethren dealt deceitfully as a brook" dried up by the summer sun, to which "the troops of Tema

looked" for supply, but it had "vanished what time it had waxed warm" Job 6:14-20. David had a Saul, a Doeg, and an Ahithophel; and a greater than David a Judas who kissed but to betray. Micah warns us against our fellow men; "The best of them is as a briar; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." "Trust not in a friend; put not confidence in a guide." Mic 7:4-5. And Jeremiah says--"Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." Jer 17:5. In the face of such testimonies need we wonder that false friends are often greater trials than open foes? "Save me from my friends!" has been the bitter cry from many a heart.

4. But after all, our acutest trials are from WITHIN. Many who in the providence of God are comparatively exempt from severe outward trials, suffer an internal martyrdom. A heavy storm may be raging in the air; sleet, and snow, and hail, driven by a keen east wind, may darken the sky; and you in your warm room may see some poor traveler pelted by the pitiless storm. But you, though under shelter, may be racked with bodily pain, or be dying of slow disease, or be inwardly crushed by mental grief and sorrow. What is his trial compared with yours? What are fingers chilled with cold, compared to hands burning with fever?

What is a sprinkling of snow on the clothes to a load of ice on the heart; or floods of rain without to a flood of passionate grief within? Thus outward trials are severe to the eye, but inward trials are severe to the heart. Poverty, sickness, bereavements, persecutions, do not crush and break the heart like guilt and remorse, the terrors of the Almighty, and the pangs of hell.

But let us now take a glance at the "diverse TEMPTATIONS" into which the people of God fall, as distinct from the trials which lie in their path. There are many saints of God whose life is a series of outward trials; and there are others who know less of external trial, but more of internal temptation. The Lord arranges every lot, for though it seems casually "cast into the lap, yet the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Pr 15:33. He appoints to every one of his children the peculiar path which he has to tread, and the number and weight of the burdens which he has to carry. Whatever trial, therefore, or temptation comes, it is of the Lord--either indirectly by permission, or directly by visitation. Many appear to pass through life without any deep acquaintance with temptations. Job's friends, though good men, seem to have had little or no experience of them; while Job, Heman, Asaph, Jeremiah, and Jonah were distracted by them. The same difference exists now.

Viewing, then, "temptations" as distinct from "trials" we may divide them into two leading branches--temptations which distress, and temptations which allure. The former are the more painful, but the later are the more perilous.

1. Temptations which DISTRESS.

You might have walked for some time in the ways of the Lord without any deep experience of the infidelity, blasphemy, rebelliousness, enmity, and horrid wickedness of your fallen nature. This being the case, you were secretly lifted up with pride and self-righteousness. You had not yet had that deep discovery of yourself which was needful to humble you in the dust. You did, it is true, look in some measure to the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, but not knowing your utter ruin and the desperate wickedness of your heart, you looked with but half a glance; though you took hold of him, it was but with one hand; and though you walked with him, it was but with a limping foot. The reason was that temptation had not yet shorn your locks, bound you with fetters of brass, and put you to grind in the prison house.

But you suddenly fell into one of these "diverse temptations." I will merely name two as specimens of their nature. Infidelity assailed your mind all in a moment as with a cloud of the thickest, densest darkness. A

veil was at once cast over the Scriptures, for you could not even believe them to be true. Objection after objection started up, and you shuddered with horror lest you should live and die a confirmed infidel. O what a trial was this! I have been here, and know what work it makes. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" We reject the thought with horror, fly back to past experiences, muster up all our evidences, think of the faith and hope of departed saints, cry to God for help to believe; but still the poisoned arrow is rankling in the heart.

Or you may have been tempted to open blasphemy--even to that dreadful crime of blaspheming God. Job and Jeremiah were thus tempted, and many a child of God has been pursued night and day with the same horrible temptation. But what an evidence it is of the deep corruption of the human mind and the power of Satan that people, say tender females, who hedged in by the restraints of society, education, and morality, have never dropped an unbecoming expression from their lips, or scarcely heard one uttered by others, may yet be assailed, when called by grace, by the most horrid temptations to blasphemy, from the very thought of which their natural feelings revolt, and of which they would have deemed themselves utterly incapable. I have known such cases, and therefore name them, that if any here present are passing through this "fiery trail," they may not be utterly cast down as though some strange thing has happened to them. 1Pe 4:12. Many object to such things being even spoken of; but their very mention as experienced by those who fear God has sometimes put the temptation to flight, or abated its power.

But what a proof of the corruption of man--what an evidence of the power of Satan! I have stood by the sea shore and seen it spread out as calm as a mirror; and I have sailed on its bosom when not a breeze ruffled its face. But I have seen it in a storm when its billows rolled in full of foam and fury; and I have sailed over it when wave after wave dashed over the deck. But it was the same sea both in calm and storm. So the mind of man may be as calm as a slumbering sea, or raging as the stormy wave; but it is the same heart still. The breath of temptation, like the ocean wind, makes all the difference between calm, and storm.

But let me ask, do you not fear, reverence, and adore that great and glorious name which Satan has been tempting you to blaspheme? Is not this, then, a proof that from him these suggestions come? Of all Satan's temptations this seems to be the most infernal; of all his threats, this the most deadly. If Satan could but prevail upon you to speak the word, he would triumph over you as a lost soul. Therefore he does all he can to drive you into the very pitfalls of hell. But he shall not succeed, for the "the weapons formed against you shall not prosper." His is the sin and his shall be the punishment.

2. Temptations which ALLURE.

But there are temptations not so distressing and yet more perilous. These I have just been hinting at are seen; but there are those which are unseen. The enemy can hardly disguise his plotting hand in the former; he spreads the snare, but does not show himself in the latter. In the one he is a lion from the swelling of Jordan, in the other a trailing serpent hidden in the grass. There are temptations so thoroughly adapted to our fallen nature--snares so suited to our lusts, and Satan has such a way of seducing his victim little by little into the trap until it falls down upon him, that none can escape but by the power of God. I am well convinced that none can deliver the soul from these snares of the fowler, except that the mighty hand which brings up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay! Time, however, will not permit me to enter into all the diversified trials and temptations with which the Lord exercises his saints.

II. I therefore pass on to show what is the EFFECT of falling into these diverse temptations; for that is the source of the joy which we are bidden to count them. There is no profit or pleasure in temptations and trials viewed by themselves, for "no chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous." Heb 12:11. It is the effect they produce by which we are to calculate our gains. And this effect is two-fold as here pointed out by the pen of the Holy Spirit. One is that it tries faith; the other that it works patience.

1. The trial of faith. Whenever God communicates faith, he tries it. Why? That it may be proved to be genuine. Look at this in the case of Abraham. Abraham is a pattern to believers; he is therefore called "the father of all those who believe" Ro 4:11--his faith being so eminent, and of a character so spiritual and gracious. But see how it was tried. For twenty-five years did the Lord try the faith he had planted in Abraham's bosom. Year after year, month after month, week after week, day after day, was the Lord trying Abraham's faith. Sarah's petulance, eager craving for a child, jealousy of Hagar and then oppressing her until she fled out of the house, and their increasing years and delayed prospects, must all have deeply tried the patriarch's faith. But against hope he believed in hope, was "strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform." Ro 4:18-21. Look, too, at David's case. How he was hunted like a partridge on the mountains, and was in continual apprehension of losing his life by the hand of Saul, so that he said, "There is but a step between me and death." View those two eminent saints of God; where their faith was tried to the uttermost!

In fact, the stronger your faith is, the greater trials it will have to endure. The reality, the genuineness, as well as the strength of your faith are only to be evidenced by the amount of trial which it will stand. When for instance, you have been walking for some months in a smooth and easy path, and have scarcely experienced any trials from without or within, you have hardly known the strength, or indeed even the reality, of your own faith. You have been induced to take things very much for granted. You have not looked to the Lord as you should look to him; nor trusted to his strength as you should trust to it. You have been secretly leaning upon your own wisdom, resting upon a consistent profession, and mistaking ease in Zion for assurance of faith. But a trial comes. Where is your faith now? It sinks out of sight; you seem to have none; at least, none that you can make use of, or that does you any good. "O," you say, "I thought I could trust the Lord; but how can I trust him now that he does not appear? He hides his face; the heavens are as brass; he shuts out my cry. Why is this trial come upon me? O that I could believe! What shall I do if God does not appear? I am a lost man without him. O that he would manifest himself in mercy to my soul!"

The Lord is now trying your faith--whether you can trust to him in the dark as well as in the light--whether you can look to Jesus at the right hand of the Father with a single eye--whether you can rest the whole weight of your soul upon his blood and righteousness; or whether you lack something in yourself to win the favor of God and recommend you to his notice. Thus the Lord tries your faith by putting a strain upon it. It is like the mode in which the strength of cannon is tested; the guns are doubly or trebly charged, and if they do not then burst, they are considered equal to anything that may be afterwards required of them. Or as cables are tried in the Queen's service; they are subjected to a strain very much greater than any they will be called upon to endure in actual use, and if they stand that heavy strain they are deemed fit for sea. In fact, not a sword or musket is entrusted to the soldier which has not been submitted to the most severe trial; or what would be the consequence? They might fail in the day of battle. Thus when the Lord calls a man to be a soldier and puts faith into his hand, he gives him a faith which he himself has tried, according to his own word--"I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich." He will not put into the hand of his soldier a sword that will break to pieces when he meets the enemy, or a weapon that shatters in the hand at the first onset, but one with which he shall be able to fight, and with which he shall

come off more than conqueror; and that is, tried faith, his own gift and work.

I extend the word to all your temptations as well as your trials. You will one day see, if not now, how every one has worked to this end; to try your faith, of what sort it is--whether your heart is right with God--whether you are sincere before the heart-searching Jehovah--whether you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a faith of a divine operation, or whether your faith and hope are merely of nature's manufacture, put into your hand by self and Satan, to ruin you under a guise of religion.

2. The working of patience. Another effect of trial is pointed out by the Holy Spirit--it "works patience." By "patience" we are not altogether to understand the word in its usual signification. The word "patience" in Scripture means rather endurance. It does not so much signify that quietness of soul--that calm and silent, that uncomplaining, unrepining submission to God's will which we understand by the word "patience"--as that firm and lasting endurance of all that God may see fit to lay upon us. It is a soldier's virtue rather than a hermit's; a stout man's fortitude under pain rather than a quiet woman's passive submission under suffering. "You have heard," says James, "of the patience of Job." Look at the context. "Behold we count them happy who endure." What follows? "You have heard of the patience of Job." Now it is just the same word in both expressions in the original, and should therefore have been rendered the "endurance" of Job; for not all his trials and temptations made him give up faith and hope.

Faith, then, viewed as the gift of God, and as proved by all the trials and temptations that he sends to exercise it, "works" the soldier-like endurance of which our text speaks. For how is a soldier made? Send him to the Crimea or to India; that will make him a soldier. He does not learn the stern duties of his calling by being paraded upon Aldershot heath or by going through his drill upon Southsea common. He must go into actual war; he must hear the cannon roar and see the sabers flash in his face; give and take cut and thrust; lie all night upon the battlefield; rush up the steep breach amid the groans of the wounded, and press on determined to conquer or die. The battle alone makes the soldier--the experience, not the theory of war.

How is the Christian soldier made? By going to chapel--by reading the Bible--by singing hymns--by talking about religion? Just as much as the veteran warrior is made at Aldershot or Southsea. He must go into the battle and fight hand to hand with Satan and the flesh; he must endure cruel wounds given by both outward and inward foes; he must lie upon the cold ground of desolation and desertion; he must rush up the breach when called to storm the castles of sin and evil, and never "yield or leave the field," but press on determined to win the day or die. In these battles of the Lord, in due time he learns how to handle his weapons--how to call upon God in supplication and prayer, to trust in Jesus Christ with all his heart, to beat back Satan, to crucify self, and live a life of faith in the Son of God. Religion is not a matter of theory or of doctrine; it is to be in the thick of the battle, fighting with the enemy hand to hand, foot to foot, shoulder to shoulder. This actual--not sham warfare--makes the Christian soldier hardy--strengthens the muscles of his arm--gives him skill to wield his weapons, and power sometimes to put his enemies to flight. Thus it "works endurance,"--makes him a veteran, so that he is no longer a raw recruit, but one able to fight the Lord's battles and "to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

What then have been your best friends? Your trials. Where have you learned your best lessons? In the school of temptation. What has made you look to Jesus? A sense of your sin and misery. Why have you hung upon the word of promise? Because you had nothing else to hang upon. Thus, could you look at the results, you would see this--that trials and temptations produced upon your spirit the two effects of which the text speaks; that they tried your faith, and that sometimes to the uttermost, so that in the trial it seemed

as if all your faith were gone; and yet they have wrought patience--they have made you endure.

Why have you not long ago given up all religion? Have your trials made you disposed to give it up? They have made you hold all the faster by it. Have your temptations induced you to let it go as a matter of little consequence? Why, you never had more real religion than when you were tried whether you had any; and never held faith with a tighter grasp than when Satan was pulling it all away. The strongest believers are not the men of doctrine, but the men of experience; not the boasters but the fighters; not the 'parade officers' in all the millinery of spotless regimentals, but the tattered, soiled, wounded, half-dead soldiers that give and take no quarter from sin or Satan.

But the word has another meaning, one in more strict accordance with the word "patience;" that is submission to God's will. When the Lord puts us in the furnace, we go in kicking and rebelling. Our coward flesh shrinks from the flame. But when we have been some time in the furnace and find that we cannot kick ourselves out, and that our very struggling only makes the coals burn more fiercely--at last, by the grace of God working in us, we begin to lie still. It was so with Job. How he fought against God! How his carnal mind was stirred up in self-justification and rebellion until the Lord himself appeared and spoke to his heart from heaven. Then he came to this point--"I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes sees you. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Then the Lord accepted him and delivered him; turned his captivity, pardoned, and blessed him. So with Abraham, when he submitted to sacrifice Isaac, God appeared to deliver him. So with David, when he submitted to the Lord's chastening hand, he brought him back to Jerusalem. But this will be more evident in our next point, to which I now hasten.

III. The apostolic counsel, "Let patience have her perfect work," that the saint of God "may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

There is a work for patience to perform. Every grace of the Spirit has a certain work to do. As in a large factory, every hand knows his place and the work he has to do, so in the wonderful piece of divine machinery--the work of God upon the soul, every grace of the Spirit has its separate work to perform. Faith does not do the work of love, nor hope that of faith, nor love that of patience. Each different grace, like separate wheels in some beautiful machine, has its own place and its own work. Patience then has its work; and what is that? Twofold, according to my explanation of the word.

1. To ENDURE all trials, live through all temptations, bear all crosses, carry all loads, fight all battles, toil through all difficulties, and overcome all enemies.

2. To SUBMIT to the will of God--to own that he is Lord and King--to have no will or way of its own, no scheme or plan to please the flesh, avoid the cross, or escape the rod; but to submit simply to God's righteous dealings, both in providence and grace, believing that he does all things well, that he is a sovereign "and works all things according to the counsel of his own will." Eph 1:11.

Now until the soul is brought to this point, the work of patience is not perfect; it may be going on, but it is not consummated. You may be in the furnace of temptation now, passing through the fiery trial. Are you rebellious or submissive? If still rebellious, you must abide in the furnace until you are brought to submission; and not only so, but it must be thorough submission, or else patience has not its perfect work. The dross of rebellion must be scummed off, and the pure metal flow down. It is all of God's grace to feel this for a single moment.

But are there not, and have there not been, times and seasons in your soul, when you could be still and know that he is God? when you could submit to his will, believing that he is too wise to err--too good to be unkind? When this submission is felt, patience has its perfect work. Look at Jesus, our great example; see him in the gloomy garden, with the cross in prospect before him on the coming morn. How he could say--"Not my will, but yours be done!" There was the perfect work of patience in the perfect soul of the Redeemer.

Now you and I must have a work in our soul corresponding to this, or else we are not conformed to the suffering image of our crucified Lord. Patience in us must have its perfect work; and God will take care that it shall be so. As in a beautiful piece of machinery, if the engineer sees a cog loose or a wheel out of gear, he must adjust the defective part, that it may work easily and properly, and in harmony with the whole machine; so if the God of all our salvation sees a particular grace not in operation, or not properly performing its appointed work, he by his Spirit so influences the heart that it is again brought to work as he designed it should do.

Measure your faith and patience by this standard; but do not take in conjunction, or confound with them the workings of your carnal mind. Here we often mistake; we may be submissive as regards our spirit--meek and patient, quiet and resigned, in the inward man, yet feel many uprisings and rebellings of the flesh; and thus patience may not seem to have her perfect work. But to look for perfect submission in the flesh, is to look for perfection in the flesh, which was never promised and is never given. Look to what the Spirit is working in you--not to the carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and therefore knows neither subjection nor submission. Look at that inward principality of which the Prince of peace is Lord and Ruler, and see whether in the still depths of your soul, and where he lives and reigns, there is submission to the will of God.

But it adds, "that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." The word "perfect" in the Scripture does not mean, as applied to a saint of God, anything approaching to the usual idea of perfection, as implying spotless, sinless holiness--but one who is matured and ripened in the life of God--no longer a child but a grown man. As a tree grown to its full stature is said to have attained perfection; so when the Lord the Spirit has brought forth the work of patience in your soul, as far as regards that work you are perfect, for it is God's work in you; and so far you are "entire," that is, possessing all which that grace gives, and "lacking nothing" which that grace can communicate.

To submit wholly to the will of God, and be lost and swallowed up in conformity to it, is the height of Christian maturity here below; and he that has that, lacks nothing, for he has all things in Christ. What, then, is the greatest height of grace to which the soul can arrive? Where did grace shine forth so conspicuously as in the Lord Jesus Christ? and where did grace manifest itself more than in the gloomy garden and on the suffering cross? Was not the human nature of Jesus more manifestly filled with the Spirit, and did not every grace shine forth in him more conspicuously in Gethsemane and on Calvary than when enraptured upon the Mount of Transfiguration? So there is more manifested grace in the heart of a saint of God who, under trial and temptation, can say, "Your will be done," and submit himself to the chastening rod of his Heavenly Father, than when he is basking in the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness. How often we are mistaken in this matter--longing for enjoyment, instead of seeing the true grace makes us submit to the will of God, whether in the valley or upon the mount!

IV. The transmuting effect of grace enabling the tried and tempted family of God to "count it all joy" when they fall into diverse temptations.

This is the grand key of the whole, and on which I need not tarry long, as I have already anticipated it. We are to "count it all joy" when we fall into diverse temptations. I have been setting before you a problem in arithmetic--a sum in compound addition; add it up or down, and look at the sum total--"Joy." Take all your trials and mark them down; next add all the temptations with which your mind has been exercised; now add them up, and what is the full amount? A word of three letters--a sum more valuable than if it were three figures, and each figure a nine--"Joy." That is the sum total, according to the calculation of the Holy Spirit, of all your trials and all your temptations. You are to "count it all joy."

What mysterious arithmetic! How unlike the addition taught in schools! How different from the sums and problems set on slates and copybooks! How different, also, a result does the Lord the Spirit bring out from your own calculations when you looked at them one by one, without adding up the whole sum! Then "count it all joy" when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing that their effect is to wean you from the world--to endear Christ--to render his truth precious, and to make you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Are you satisfied with the solution of the problem? Can you write down your own name at the bottom of the sum and say, "it is proved; I carry the proof in my own bosom?"

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