



PATIENCE AND ITS PERFECT WORK

UNDER SUDDEN AND SORE TRIALS
BEING AN EXPOSITION OF JAMES 1:1-5

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FOR a striking account of the occasion of this remarkable Treatise, see Memoir of Dr Goodwin, by his son, ante, p. lxxiv. It was published anonymously in a small volume (18mo), and is one of the rarest of all Goodwin's pieces. As an evidence of its extreme scarcity, besides the very high price it fetches, equivalent to the cost of the entire Works of Goodwin in this Series, it may be mentioned that it is usually spoken of by bibliographers and others as a Sermon merely, shewing that they had never seen it. For the use of the copy from which our reprint is given, we are indebted to the rich Puritan collection of the Rev. A. B. GROSART, Kinross.

PATIENCE AND ITS PERFECT WORK

SECTION I: Introduction

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 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. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.—JAMES 1:1–5.

CHRISTIAN patience is my subject, and the perfect work of patience, ver. 4; but as an introduction thereunto, I must first open some things of the words in ver. 1, 2.

1. As to the persons he writes to, they were 'the twelve tribes scattered,' that had been and were bereft of their inheritance in their native country, and quitting that, had betaken themselves to banishment; multitudes of them, I do not say all, as appears, Acts 8:1, 'And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.' And, Acts 11:19, we find them travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus, Antioch; who went from thence afterwards into other countries. The other Apostle who wrote to the same persons, comforts them with this—1st Epistle 1:4—that they were begotten again to a better inheritance than that of Canaan, which now they were deprived of.

2. I observe that though these had been made thus sufficiently destitute and desolate already, and driven from house and home to seek their livelihoods, with their families, in foreign countries, that yet still great and pressing troubles and miseries did follow them, as one wave doth after another: they were continually falling into divers and sundry temptations of all sorts. God 'tries us every moment,' as in Job 7:18; we are chastened every morning, Ps. 37:13; and 'killed'—that is, in danger of death—'all day long,' as Rom. 8. God had not yet done with these.

3. He utters the strangest paradox upon this occasion that ever was or can be uttered; and begins with it, ver. 2, 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Thus bluntly and abruptly, without any mollifying preface or sweetening introduction, unless that of 'my brethren,' to make way for it. The fore-part, 'count it all joy,' seems to

carry a moral contradiction in the face of it unto the latter part, 'when ye fall into divers tentations;' and this latter seems to put an impossibility upon the former, which is the duty exhorted unto.—Let us consider every word of each.

1. Were it simply that they are called upon to rejoice, how uncouth is this to men in that posture and circumstance they are supposed fallen into! Well, but yet count it joy, says he: not only moderate, keep in, and smother your contrary passions,—which was the highest lesson that philosophy and the Stoics, the best of philosophers, had taught,—but the gospel calls upon us 'therefore,' &c., or for and upon these temptations, to rejoice. 'Count it joy;' that is the first.

2. All joy; the highest joy, for so 'all joy' must needs be supposed to be.

3. And this, not when they should see by experience the glorious issue and event these temptations do produce; but to account it all joy beforehand, as if they were possessed of what God promiseth shall be the assured and 'expected end,' Jer. 29:11; and to be beforehand as sure of it as if they had it already.

4. It is not when they are assaulted with troubles, but when temptations are actually broken in upon them, and they lie under them.

5. Nor yet when they are led into them by steps, or had met with them as in their way; but when they 'fall into' them. It is a downfall he speaks of, and that suddenly, at once, and utterly unexpected by them.

6. Not when you fall into one or two, but into many temptations; as, elsewhere, the word 'divers' here is translated, 1 Peter 1:6, 'manifold:' and many is imported in manifold.

7. And those not of one sort or kind, but 'divers,' and so of several sorts, as in good name, reproach, revilement: divers also as to their bodies, souls; their relations and families, friends, wives, children; inward, outward man.

8. When you fall (περιπέσητε) into them, as into a pit and snare, and so

they falling round about you; so as you have nothing to stand or lean upon, but all about you falls with you and under you, so as in all outward appearance ye are sunk and overwhelmed with the ruins.

In this case to 'count it all joy,' to shout as men in harvest, or that have gotten great spoils; when their miseries are so great that they cannot be endured, that yet their joy must be so great as more cannot be expressed; this is the hardest duty that ever was required of the distressed hearts of men. And yet God would not require it if it were not attainable; and it is attainable by no other principles but of Christianity. And argues that our Christian religion, which is the only true wisdom, ver. 5, hath so spiritfull and sovereign a virtue in it that it is able to raise spirits up unto thus high and glorious a pitch and perfection in this life.

But they might say, You have propounded this hard and strange duty to us; what ground is there that may rationally and effectually persuade and bring our hearts to it? What considerations that may procure us this joy, and how may we be wrought up to it? For God never gave any commandment but there was a full and sufficient ground and reason to enforce it.

He gives them two grounds: one at the 3d and 4th verses, '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.' This is a ground from what follows in this life. The other is at the 12th verse, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.' This is the reward that follows in the life to come, in the hope and expectation of which you may count it all joy that now you are tried; for the end and issue of them is a crown of glory, which these do work, as 2 Cor. 4:17, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

I begin with the first, what ground there is in this life to cause us to rejoice in such temptations. This, in the 3d and 4th verses, 'Knowing'—that is, deeply considering and weighing this principle of our Christian profession—'that the trying of your faith works patience.' That is one and the first, in which the Apostle tacitly supposeth this maxim, and builds

upon the supposition of it; it lies at the bottom, and yet is enough implied. It is this: That to have our graces, especially to have our faith and patience tried and drawn forth and exercised in us, to the glory of God, is the greatest blessedness of a Christian in this life.

That this is the bottom ground is evident. For why else should he propose and hold forth this of all other, with a 'for,' or particle, that gives the reason of what he had now said? That seeing their faith and other graces, as patience, &c., would be tried thereby, that therefore they should 'count it all joy.' My brethren, if we had eyes to see and to consider it, we might know, that as to have grace that accompanies salvation is the greatest mercy can befall any one in the world; so to have that grace tried and exercised and drawn forth to the utmost, is a thing of the greatest moment, the greatest spiritual privilege that can come to us after that we have that grace. And therefore, when trials come, we are to think with ourselves, Now will my graces be tried, now is that befallen me which will do it; this ought to be matter of the greatest joy to me. For from this ground and reason it is that the Apostle bids them count it all joy. And hereupon it is, for no other doth he mention here, this alone being the greatest advantage that a Christian is capable of in this life; and in this life only it is that grace is exercised.

And the reason of it lies in this, that for grace to approve itself to God in a way of the greatest well-pleasing to him, and so as to come to be approved of by God; and for a man's sincerity to have God's approbation and testimony,—as to Abraham, 'Now I know thou fearest me,'—this is the greatest privilege a saint can have, and this ought to be matter of the greatest comfort. And it is our greatest glory, according unto that, 2 Cor. 10:17, 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord;' which he there speaks in reference unto what follows in ver. 18, 'For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.' Both which the Apostle spake as that which he comforted himself withal, yea, and gloried in, even the Lord's approving of him. Job also comforted himself with this: chap. 23:10, 'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' The Apostle saith, 'The trial of your faith is more precious than gold;' and he speaketh it of the very instrument or means by which your graces are tried: the very calcining pot, or the fire, whereby it is tried—τὸ δοκιμιον,

his word is—even that is more precious than gold. Then much more the graces that are tried. And therefore the Apostle by his τὸ δοκιμῶν intends and means these very afflictions and tentations by which we are tried. They are the refiner's pot and fire. You would rejoice if you had so much gold given you. Then rejoice that you have so much affliction to try your gold. That your graces are so highly valued by God is the reason why he tries them; he would not be at the pains and cost of it else. And they being tried, and holding to be right and true gold indeed, they have thereupon his approbation upon that trial; and he sets his royal Tower stamp and mark upon them, secretly in this life, and the same will openly appear to all the world at latter day; so, in 1 Pet. 1:6, 7, 'Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' It will be found unto praise then; but it is unto praise before God now, as much as it will be then.

He mentions faith—'for the trial of your faith'—in the first and chief place, as that grace which is the most tried; and as that which, being tried, sets all the rest on work. I need not much insist on it. It is faith that shall be counted for honour and glory at that day, having been tried. It is faith which bears, and by which we bear, the stress of all tentations. It is faith by which we overcome: 1 John 5:4, 5, 'This is the victory which we have over the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world? He that believeth,' &c.

A second and more particular principle or maxim, which concerns this life, and should cause us to rejoice, is, that faith, being tried, works patience; and that if patience have its perfect work, it will make us perfect Christians. 'But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.'

He enlargeth no further upon faith; only gives it the honour that it is the mother grace, and of patience especially, when itself is tried. But he had no sooner mentioned patience but he runs out upon that, and falls upon the greatest encomium and praises of it: Let patience have its perfect work, and it will make you perfect. Now there is no occasion, or room, or

work for patience, unless there be tentations. And patience, its work is but so far as the affliction proves to be. So then, his second argument runs upon this principle, that the full work of patience in our souls is, of all other graces, the highest perfection of a Christian: and therefore, 'count it all joy to fall into tentations;' for thereby you will have that grace drawn forth to the fullest length, wound up to the highest peg, which is not done unless tentations be answerable. And in all your trials let it but have its swing, its perfect work, and it will make your persons perfect,—that is, as perfect as in this life you can be made.

Quest.—But in what respect doth it make us perfect?

Ans.—Not only in this sense—for there is a double sense of that speech—either as if when we had exercised all other graces, but yet have not had occasion for this one, that when this shall be added, that then they should be perfect Christians. But this is not the meaning, for this may be said of any other graces:; for if a man hath exercised all other graces, if he begins to exercise any one new grace, it may be said there is a perfection in this respect. As when he says to the Corinthians, 'As you have abounded in every other grace, so abound in this also,' 2 Cor. 8:7. But there is another sense, and that is his scope here, which is not to extol a perfection in common with other graces, but a singular perfection to be attributed to patience: Let patience but have its perfect work, and that alone will make you eminently perfect. And in scope is to comfort them against the greatest trials and occurrences of their lives—'tentations.' And therefore a singular and special encomium is attributed herein unto patience, which is the shield against them.

My brethren, to give the full sense of this, I will make a supposition. Suppose a Christian to have had the privilege to have lived in the exercise of all graces in a way of acting, or of an active life, as to have lived in sweet communion with God, and to have walked in the light of God's countenance all the day, Ps. 89:15; and withal to have had the opportunity of doing good, and accordingly to have done much good in an active way, as having been abundant in good works, holy duties, praying, reading, holy conferences, &c.; but yet all this while with a freedom from suffering, so as he hath not had the suffering part yet, so as there hath been no need for, or use of patience. Suppose another Christian, who

hath been obstructed and hindered and kept from such an active life of doing good with that freedom spoken of, but the dispensation of God hath disposed him to a suffering life all his days, and confined him thereunto, and therein his patience hath been exercised under all sorts of tentations; and then withal, suppose that patience, with all those gracious dispositions of heart that are proper to it, hath had its free and full passage through his heart,—such as I shall hereafter describe,—hath had its operations all sorts of ways, according as his afflictions have been: this alone would so draw out and exercise all graces, and head them, that you would say, This man is a perfect Christian; shall I say more perfect than the other? At least the text says that this makes him a perfect man.

Or again, if you will suppose one that hath been very active in the foregone part of his life, and done God great service, with an enlarged heart; and that at last, after he hath done the will of God, further to crown all, God will exercise this man's patience with great sufferings, and draweth it forth according to these his trials,—that man is perfect every way, and he lacked till then that which is his greatest perfection, and he was not before every way accomplished.

For proof that patience is the eminent perfection of a Christian—

1. Take the instance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What was Christ's perfection? He had been perfect in all active obedience, complete in all graces, yet the glory of his perfection is put upon his sufferings and his patience, Heb. 2:10, 'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' This of patient enduring was that which enhanced and exalted his obedience so: Phil. 2, 'He humbled himself, and was obedient to death,' &c. This of patient enduring was obedience learned: Heb. 5:8, 'Though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by what he suffered.' The active part of obedience was natural to him, he being, as the natural Son, the Holy One of God; having the law of God in his heart, and it was his delight, his meat and drink, to do his will, Ps. 40:8, Heb. 10; that is, this was natural to him. But for him to suffer who was the Son, and so to be patient in suffering, who was so great a person, this was to be learned, as that which was improper for such a person, the Son. And yet, as I may say, this perfected the natural

accomplishments of him; this was a lesson out of the road, utterly uncouth and extravagant. He must go to school, therefore, to learn this. For so that text implies; this he was to learn, as that which would perfect him above all. And so, indeed, to this purpose it follows in ver. 9, 'Being made perfect,' that is, by what he suffered,—as in the verse before, and chap. 2, he had also said,—and as that which did perfect him, more than all his other obedience, and rendered him more acceptable to his Father. Now it was his patience and enduring wherein that his obedience principally lay; which accordingly is so often spoken of him, as Heb. 12, 'He endured the cross,' ver. 2; and 'He endured such contradiction of sinners,' ver. 3; the same word that here is used for patience; that the verb, this the noun. 'Enduring' is put to express 'patience,' and is the word used up and down the New Testament, and in this epistle most, to express patience by, as chap. 1:12, chap. 5:8, 10, 11. Now Christ did so endure. 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; he opened not his mouth.' Hogs cry, but sheep make no din when led to the slaughter, or when their throats are cut. And this was Christ's proper and super-perfection, who is therefore proposed as an example of suffering and patience to us, and likewise of that glorious end and issue of it, in these words of that chap. 5:11, 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord,' namely of the Lord Christ, which many of these Jews he wrote to had seen with their eyes, or it was transacted in their times, and so in their view; they saw him suffer, and now they see him crowned with glory and honour, Heb. 2. That was the end of our Lord, and his sufferings, which made him perfect.

2. And as it was Jesus Christ's perfection, so it was of the most eminent saints. Look again into this epistle, chap. 5:11, and you find the primitive principle that was in vogue to be, 'Behold, we count them happy which endure,'—it is still the same word which is used for patience, as was said, —that is, We Christians generally esteem them the happiest men in the world that are most exercised with sufferings, and armed with patience to endure them. They are happy to a 'behold!' and so to a perfection, in our common esteem. 'Behold, we count them happy!' It was a common criedup maxim amongst them in those times, and the thing itself in greatest request. Then—

3. 'Take the prophets for an example,' says he, chap. 5:10. He commends them also for their patience, as well as for their prophecies. And though he describes them by this character and periphrasis, 'that have spoken in the name of the Lord,' yet that was but to set out and celebrate the example of their sufferings and patience the more. He sets the crown upon the head of that grace. Nor doth he mention any of the good they had done; nothing of that, but their sufferings only. And then by name he instanceth in Job. God boasted of him to Satan for his former active life in holiness; but you have no mention of that by the Apostle, nor in the New Testament, but he cries him up for his suffering and his patience only, as that which had endeared him to God more than all the former part of his life.

Lastly, Take the apostles. The Apostle in the Revelation puts it into his coat of arms as a piece of his nobility, and a part of his heraldry. 'I John, who am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,' Rev. 1:9.

Now, upon all these grounds, if you be true and right Christians, and know, as the Apostle's word is, how to put a due estimate upon what is your greatest interest and privilege in this life,—viz., the proof and trial of your graces, and of this grace of patience above all, as the highest perfection of a Christian, yea, of Christ himself, and which was the most eminent praise of prophets and apostles,—if you value your being rendered most pleasing unto God, then count it all joy when you thus fall into tentations. For now you have God and Christ, the great, the chief master orderer and designer of these conflicts, setting his most gracious eye upon you, pleasing himself to behold how valiantly, wisely, and gallantly you behave and acquit yourselves. He sits in heaven as the great spectator of these jousts and tournaments, which are to him as spectacles which are sports to us; to which the Apostle alludes, 1 Cor. 4:9, 'For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.' Rejoice therefore, as good soldiers would, to enter into these lists, in the sight of their great general and emperor, whom they have given themselves up to please. Thus, 2 Tim. 2:4, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him

who hath chosen him to be a soldier.' Therefore get your hearts free and loose from all those entanglements that arise from adherency to the things of this world; from inordinate passions that cleave unto the things of this life, which will hinder and weaken you as to a patient bearing the losses and crosses you meet with in it: knowing also that you cannot please the captain of your salvation, nor approve yourselves more to him than by a patient endurance; which is, in the words before that passage, in that place to Timothy, exhorted to, ver. 3, 'Therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ.' And in its coherence this follows, 'it pleaseth your general to see it.' And in Col. 1, he first, in the general, prays, ver. 10, 'that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;' which pleasing, as it consisteth in fruitfulness in good works, or the active life of a Christian,—'being fruitful in every good work,' in the same verse,—so in being 'strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering,' as that which is the second, and chiefest, and most glorious part that a Christian is to perform, to consummate the other; and which, therefore, requires a more glorious power to work it than the former, the active part, did, as ver. 11 shews—'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering.'

Thus much for the opening of the words, in order to that I am more setly to handle, which followeth.

SECTION II: What is Patience & How is it Wrought

I HAVE three general heads to treat of:—

I. What patience is.

II. How patience is wrought.

III. What it is for patience to have a perfect work.

1ST GENERAL HEAD

What the grace of patience is

Take it at large,—that is, in the full comprehension of it,—it is a constant persisting, whether to do the will of God without fainting, or to suffer the will of God with submission, and quietness, and cheerfulness, to the end of a man's days. And thus taken, it respects doing as well as suffering. The good ground is said to bring forth its fruit, all its fruit, with patience, in the parable of the sower. It respects—

First, Doing the will of God: Rom. 2:7, 'To them who by patient continuance in well-doing'—the Greek is, 'the patience of a good work'—'seek for glory and honour,' &c.

And the reason why patience is required to every good work is because there is a difficulty that accompanies every duty; and to the putting forth of every grace, that we need have patience to perform the duty constantly, and to continue in the practice of that grace. There is a difficulty, not only from our own corruption, unto which the commands of God are grievous, but from the circumstances of times, places, persons we live in and amongst, though they should not persecute; as not to 'run into the same excess of riot,' to speak or do what we know doth not please the company we are in. Thus, to be chaste in Sodom was to Lot a trial: to condemn the world by a different carriage, as in being stricter than others on the Lord's day, or in family duties, &c., to cross the stream: to be singular, Matt. 5:47, and the like. Heb. 12:12, 'Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees:' wherein I observe that in doing good in any kind, we are not only lame creatures, and walk as those that halt, which breeds an awkwardness unto any duty; but further, we are apt by reason thereof to turn out of the way, as there, if rugged. The members we should walk withal are feeble; our hands we should act with are hanging down; and so the performance hath a difficulty. To go up the hill of good duties (though private and personal) without weariness, to keep straight paths, not to

pick and choose our way, and not to baulk the way or work which God finds us to do, Eccles. 9:10; especially not to faint towards the end, when we come to the brow of the hill; these all have a wearisomeness in them. Now, that which principally heartens and strengthens us to all this is patience, as in ver. 1 he had prefaced, 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us;' we need patience for every step of it, in doing as well as in suffering. And in the verse immediately before that exhortation now opened, (it is ver. 11,) the Apostle puts and devolves an even and quiet walking upon patience, obtained first by suffering, in these words, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' So as a quiet, resolute, and strong performance of all the duties of righteousness is from patience, and is much the fruit of that patience we get by chastisements. The suffering life helps and contributes much to the active life; for as there is a patience required in doing God's will, so suffering his will fits the heart for it.

But this of patience in well-doing is not, in strict sense, that patience which is here in my text to be understood.

Patience is therefore, secondly, the suffering the will of God in any kind. And this doth patience eminently respect. And that is the renowned patience which we almost everywhere meet with, and which the text calls for; such as when sudden and unexpected trials and tentations, which they fall into, fall out, as ver. 2. And so is not meant of the difficulties that accompany our ordinary constant way of personal walking, in performing the duties of our holy profession.

Obj.—But you will say, My sufferings are not for the gospel, as theirs here intended were, but they are mere providential accidents that have fallen upon me, out of common providence, and but such as befall wicked men. They are not from outward persecution, for Christ's sake or my profession, but from God's hand.

Ans.—I shall answer this, here, once for all.

1. The words of this very text may somewhat relieve us herein; for it is

'tentations' at large that are spoken of, and tentations arising from sudden downfalls into miseries, and so of any kind. He doth not altogether restrain it to temptations by persecution, though they are mainly intended, but it may, and ought to be, extended to other providential occurrences; and the word ὑπομονή, used for patience, signifieth a remaining under any pressures unbroken and whole, be they of what kind soever. It respects, indeed, afflictions mainly for the gospel, yet not exclusively to afflictions in common.

2. In the prosecution of this argument, the Apostle doth manifestly carry in his eye other tentations or sufferings than from persecution, as appears from the examples he allegeth to press them to this patience. For among others, and above all others, he brings the instance of Job and his, by name only, as well as of the prophets in general, whom, Christ says, they persecuted, Matt. 5:12. Thus, chap. 5:11, 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job.' His alleging the prophets is but a general: ver. 10, 'Take the prophets'—not naming any—'for an example of suffering and of patience.' But that of Job singularly, and by name. Now, surely he would not cite his most eminent example, to confirm his exhortation to this patience he intended, of one whose case did not come within the compass and dint of his exhortation. Let us, therefore, have recourse to Job's case and story. His losses were but providential from God. The Sabeans and Chaldeans plundered him of his goods, and slew his servants. And 'the fire of God,' or from God, 'is fallen from heaven,' so his messengers tell him, chap. 1:16. It is true it was the devil, out of spite, that moved them that did it; but they did it, not in a way of persecution, but as common enemies, as when the clans of one country break in upon another. But it was God and the devil agreed it together; yea, and it was God gave first occasion to the devil to move him to have leave to do it. So as that was not for the gospel's sake in way of persecution. Nor did Job at all know of that transaction between God and Satan, not all that while his patience was in the exercise of it, but took all as the hand of God, though extraordinary.

If you now ask a description of patience, as it thus respects suffering the will of God, we must give it as it is in the word of God in the height, for that is the rule itself that directs to it, and not lown it to what is found in our hearts. And yet that which afterwards follows, and will confirm every

tittle of it, is drawn mostly from examples of the saints, either in the Old or New Testaments, which shew that it is attainable, though with allowance to defects, which accompany all graces in this life.

It is a constant, thankful, joyful enduring, with perseverance to the end of a man's life, all the trials that are grievous, how great, how long, how hopeless soever as to coming out of them; mortifying and compescing the inordinacy of opposite passions, as fear, grief, care, anxiety, which will arise upon such afflictions; with submitting to God's will, for God's glory, and his good pleasure's sake; still blessing and sanctifying God in all, waiting on God, and relieving one's self by faith in what is to be had in God, and from God, in communion with him, and from his love, in this life; in expectation also of that glory which is the reward after this life ended.

I might, in this place, confirm every word and tittle of this description, either out of examples of holy men or the rules which the word gives. But I omit the set collection of such proofs here, because that, scatteredly, up and down, in the particulars that follow, this will be found performed.

2D GENERAL HEAD

How patience is wrought

Brethren, while I shew you how patience is wrought, I do withal shew you the way and means to obtain it; for by the same it is wrought, by the same it is nourished and maintained. And I shall not go out of the text for this.

There are two principles here that work patience. The first is faith: ver. 3, 'Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.' And because, in Gal. 5:6, it is said, 'faith worketh by love,'—that is, faith worketh by love whatever it worketh,—therefore we must find also that love works patience. And that you have in ver. 12 too, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' Why doth he put in 'to them that love him,' whilst he speaks of him that endureth tentations, but because it is love enables a man to endure temptation? So that faith in the first place, and then faith working by love in the second

place, works patience or enduring.

And the confirmations of these two will give proofs to the latter parts of that description I gave of patience; to wit, those of the soul's relieving itself by faith, by what is to be had in God, &c.

I. How doth faith work patience?

Ans.—First, in the general, faith is the substance of things hoped for, and indeed of all things that are revealed in the word; that is, it makes them subsistent and real to a man's soul. Faith does this, as the eleventh to the Hebrews shews. And thereupon faith hath all the motives and considerations that the whole word affords, all which it brings in to the soul, and makes them subsistent to it, to support it in trials. All is let in by faith; that is the tunnel that fills the vessel. And by thus bringing home to a man's soul all the considerations the word affords, which may induce a man to patience, it works it. This is but general.

These considerations in the word are infinite, and I cannot stand to instance; I will only give what are most proper to faith.

First of all, Faith hath a privative, emptying work. It empties the soul of all its own worth, and righteousness, and excellency in its own eyes, and gives a thorough sight unto the soul of the sinfulness of sin, of its spiritual sins, and contrarieties of all in itself unto holiness and faith; and withal fully convinceth it of its just deservedness to be utterly destroyed, and therefore much more of its due desert of all or any afflictions whatever, they being any or all of them far less than destruction itself. And in the sight and sense of these faith lays the soul a poor, empty, naked, wretched creature in all spiritual respects, both in the sight and presence of God and in its own eyes. And this helps greatly towards working patience. You shall observe, in that golden chain of graces, whereof each latter link depends upon the former, Matt. 5:3–5, how poverty of spirit is placed first: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' that is, that are emptied of themselves, look upon themselves as having nothing, deserving nothing, able to do nothing spiritually. And this true poverty of spirit they have from faith wrought; for blessedness is only pronounced of them that believe, and of the fruits of faith in them, according to that, Rom. 4:7–9.

Then, secondly, follows, 'Blessed are they that mourn,' namely, for their sins; that in the second place. And then, thirdly, 'Blessed are the meek,' that is, those who, in the sight of their poverty and sinfulness, lie at God's feet, so subdued and affected as God may do what he will to them or with them. Thus it is with them when they are thus emptied, which is when they have seen their sins and deservedness to be destroyed, and are humbled for them and mourn for them. These foregoing dispositions work meekness, submission to God. They have nothing to say against whatever he shall do, but to justify God in all, and to condemn themselves. And all these make them willing and patient to take any thing well at the hands of God. It is an excellent speech, to our purpose, of the church in that humbled frame of heart you find her in, Lam. 3:39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' The church expresseth it as the most brutish, improper incongruity, unbecoming a man, such as there could not be imagined a greater. What I for a man to complain and think much at the punishment of his sins! a man to murmur, as the word is, against God! a sinful man against the holy God, his righteous judge! And it is certain that thinking much is the ground of all impatience; and, on the contrary, a submissive temper of spirit unto God is the ground of all patience. But why doth she put in, besides, to convince such a one of the folly, injustice, and iniquity of it, that he is a living man; 'Why doth a living man complain?' Art thou alive? Art a living man still in this world? Then hast thou little cause to complain, whatever thy misery be. Whilst thou art alive, thou art not destroyed. Consider how hell and destruction is thy portion, and the due punishment of thy sins; and so thou hast infinitely less than thou deservest, and therefore thou hast no reason to complain. The church, out of her own sense and apprehension of this, had said before, ver. 22, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.' She saith not, that our goods are not consumed, or that our houses are not burnt; for indeed that was the church's very case when she spake this. Jerusalem was burnt, their women ravished, their goods plundered, their bodies famished, as you read in the same Lamentations almost everywhere. But yet there was a remnant of persons who were not consumed; and this, said she, is of the Lord's mercies, of his tender mercies, out of his bowels, as the word there is. And this being less than destruction, or being consumed, is her reason for that expostulation forementioned, ver. 39. As also of that her so great

submission, from that ver. 22 unto the 39th verse. You find the very same to this, as a ground of patience, expressed elsewhere, after the captivity ended: Ezra 9:13, 'Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds,' say they, 'and for our great trespasses.' Shall, then, a living man complain for the punishment of his sin, when it is so infinitely far less than he deserves? This consideration works patience, as it hath reason. If a man deserves to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and he is but burnt in the hand, shall this man complain? Let that man down on his knees at the bar, and thank the judge or prince that he had not his due desert, the gallows. And the consideration of this is that also which makes a man accept the punishment of his iniquity, as you have it in Lev. 26:41, 'If ye accept the punishment,' &c.; that is, if ye kiss the rod. And what makes a man come to accept the punishment of his iniquities? Oh! the punishment of my iniquity is infinitely far less than I deserve, for, thinks he, damnation is my portion. This is the first thing that works patience, the consideration of our own deservedness to be destroyed, and this is from the emptying work of faith.

Secondly, Faith brings home to a man's soul the dominion of God, and the sovereignty of that dominion over a man's soul and person, to do what he will with them; and that may very well hush and quiet a man. In Job 9:12, 'Behold, he taketh away,' (destroys a city, a nation, suppose, as in chap. 12:23, 'He increaseth the nations, and destroys them; enlargeth the nations, and straitens them again,') and 'who can hinder him?'—as in that chap. 9,—'and who will say unto him, What dost thou?' As it follows, 'If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers stoop under him;' or, 'the helpers of strength,' as in the margin, 'they bow under him.' He took away your goods, and who could hinder him? The fire burnt this city, notwithstanding all the inhabitants that were interested, and able to have quenched it; yet the strong helpers stood helpless, looking on, weeping, shaking their heads, and crying, Alas! For why? Who could hinder him? They all bowed under him. And again, Job 34:31, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.' For, as ver. 33, 'Should it'—the evil or the good he is pleased to bring on thee—'be according to thy mind?' (Heb., Should it be 'from with thee?') that is, from what is in and with thee. Must he ask counsel first of thee,

and know what thy mind is? 'He will recompense it,' or dispense it as he pleaseth, 'whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose,'—that is, whether thy mind be for or against it,—'and not I.' (This is the speech of Elihu in the person of God, and on his behalf.) That is, Shouldest thou dispose of all these things for me, and not I myself? says God. This may and must silence all and every man, as well as it did Job there. For it follows, 'Therefore speak,' if thou hast anything to say against this, 'what thou knowest.' As if he had said, This is not to be contradicted, but to be wholly submitted to.

But, my brethren, faith brings home to the heart a message of a higher sovereignty, even of love from God borne to you, and tells all you that sincerely profess an interest in God, that God hath shewn his absolute dominion already towards you in saving your souls. It is an absolute dominion that, as Rom. 9 shews. And what else is the meaning of that speech, 'I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful?' It is a speech of dominion. Well, hath God shewed his dominion in saving thy soul with difference? hath he shewn it on this, the good side? Then truly thou mayest very well give him leave to exercise his dominion over all else that thou hast; thou mayest very well be content he shew his dominion upon thy lumber and thy appurtenances. He might have shewn his dominion in destroying both your goods and souls too, as he did the Sodomites when he burnt their city.

But, thirdly, Faith brings home the love of God, the soul's interest in God, with a communion and fellowship with God, which may well serve to strengthen patience in the greatest distresses. This you see in David at Ziklag, when the city was burnt,—I therefore instance in it,—and his goods all plundered, and his wives carried away. And David was greatly distressed, the people talking of stoning him. Then it is said, 'but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' His interest in him, and the coming in of his love, as being his God, did hearten and strengthen him against all, 1 Sam. 30:6. Likewise, in extremity of famine, when there was not bread, nor oil, nor wine, nor meat to eat, this wrought the like, Hab. 3:17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no more

herd in the stalls;—here are all those things enumerated as wanting that are the means to support life and nature, and it is the want of food and raiment for you and yours that you fear in the loss of your goods, and loss of your livelihoods;—'yet,' says he, 'I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' A man hath all in God before him still. And faith brings home all in God, or carries the heart out unto God, to fetch in comfort from him, in these the greatest extremities. There are two things there distinct. He first says he will rejoice in the Lord, even in what the Lord is in himself: a God blessed for ever, Amen! And if God be happy and blessed for evermore, I cannot be miserable, says that soul that can rejoice in this, that however God enjoys a perfect blessedness; and I do so rejoice in that, that whilst God continues to be God, and these apprehensions and disposition of heart do but continue in me, I have enough. The second is, that he is my God, the God of my salvation; so Habakkuk, 'I will joy in the God of my salvation.' And then to be sure, while he is happy, I shall be happy indeed. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul,' Lam. 3, in the midst of those troubles. The Lord help us to faith!

My brethren, the love of God brought in by faith will help a man to bear up under any condition. You know that place, Rom. 8; he had triumphed in the love of God, ver. 31, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' And ver. 35, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword?' Mark his resolution, expressed thereupon, in ver. 37, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' That speech, 'Nay, in all these things,' &c., is a triumphant slighting of all he had reckoned up, and it was all any way formidable, or that might be judged opposite to our comforts in this world, which he had reckoned up; and yet speaks at that rate as if faith on the love of God and Christ scorned such low and weak and poor adversaries, as not enough, or not of might enough for them to try their strength upon; and is as if he had said, Are these all that come out against us, and threaten to hurt us? But are these all indeed? Nay then, says he, if these be all, we are safe enough; we are more than conquerors in all these. But how comes this to pass? It is added, 'through him that loved us.' Not only in that he, loving us, joins his strength to ours to support us, but it is also meant objectivè, that the love of God and Christ coming in fresh upon our hearts, the apprehension of that is

sufficient; and in that respect he says, 'through him that loved us.' It is objectivè spoken of Christ's love, as it is the object of our faith, and not assistenter. We are more than conquerors through his love taken in by us, and shed abroad in our hearts; and by reason that his love comes in and supports us under all, and helps us to conquer all. As faith hath all in God to rejoice in, and so helps the soul to patience; so especially it hath its love, in all sorts of distresses.

Fourthly, Faith tells us that there will be a good issue of all as to the other world; yea, and in this world also, in such things that relate to that world, Luke 21:18, 19. He had spoken before in that chapter of the greatest distresses that could befall men,—as, if you read the verses before, appeareth,—and also of such as should fall upon the people of God amongst them personally, as well as upon the nation of the Jews in their final desolation. And besides that common calamity which befell the people of God, with the rest of that nation, he says, over and above, they shall first 'lay their hands on you,' ver. 12, 'and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, and shall put some of you to death;'—it is in all three Evangelists;—and in ver. 16, 'Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.' But, says he, comfort yourselves with what will certainly be the issue: ver. 18, 'There shall not a hair of your head perish.' How? Not a hair of your head perish! What a strange saying is this, when he had said just before they should be persecuted and put to death! How doth he say then, Not a hair of your head shall perish? Why, because the issue shall be such as should make amends for every hair. The soul shall say, I have not lost a hair. Nay, besides, those of you they cannot put to death shall have a hundred-fold, and that in this life, as elsewhere, in spiritual blessings. And faith, eyeing these things, relieves the soul. Observe but what follows there as to our purpose in hand, for which I quote this place, in ver. 19, the very next verse, 'In your patience possess your souls;' the meaning from the coherence is, You may well possess your souls in patience, for I have told you the issue will be most blessed and glorious.

Fifthly, Faith brings in heaven as the reward of patient enduring; thus, in chap. 1:12 of our Apostle, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:

for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' And this is the conclusion of his present discourse about patient enduring. 'When he is tried,' that is, when his trials are finished and gone through with; and his faith hath all along wrought patience in his course. It is persevering patience, or endurance, receives this crown. Other graces strive, but faith and patience, they are crowned. And further, in proportion it holds that as a man's trials and temptations have been, and his patience suitable, such shall the greatness of his reward be, and accordingly measured forth unto him. And faith in the intuition of that glory heartens patience, Rom. 5. Faith having caused us first to 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,' ver. 2, causeth us also to 'glory in tribulations,' ver. 3, in the strength of our hope in that glory. Which hope is said further to be increased in us, through tribulations working patience, ver. 4. As thus, 'patience works experience,' ver. 5, that is, many a fresh experiment of our own graces and God's dealings in those trials; and those experiences do work up a hope or assurance of glory (as 1 John 3:2) to that degree of firmness that maketh us not ashamed, not in respect only of the real disappointment of that glory at death, but not in a man's own hope thereof in his own heart,—for in respect to that hope of his this is spoken,—because that over and above, and besides those foresaid experiments, 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost' himself immediately, 'who is given to us;' which shedding, &c., of God's love is no other than the earnest and prelibation of that glory. And this is given as the reward of our patience and tribulations, which are but the loss of things earthly, in exchange for which we receive this hope and beginning of glory. If thou hadst had all the brass and pewter that was in thy house, and hath been melted by this fire, therewithal turned into gold; and the stones that paved thy yards, or the bricks or lime that raised thy walls, all changed into precious stones; thy glass windows, that were dissolved, converted into diamonds,—thou hadst little cause to complain at the loss. Now read Isa. 54:11, 12, 'O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires; I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.' And if thou hast gotten any increase of grace by these losses, then hath much of this in Isaiah been truly and spiritually fulfilled in thee. And these repairs are in this life. But besides that, 'Thou

hast a building made without hands, eternal in the heavens,' 2 Cor. 5:1, which stands ready for thee. Those believing Hebrews might well suffer the spoiling of their goods with joy, whilst they found sealed, and put into their hearts, bills of exchange to receive all again in eternal treasures in heaven. But this was their very case: 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' Heb. 10:34. And this happy lot will come to be thine, if thou exercisest upon thy losses faith and patience. It follows in that Heb. 10, the following verses, 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.'—This for faith's working patience.

II. Our love to God works patience. Love to God in us works patience, or faith by love, as I shewed out of ver. 12. Love to God makes us cleave to God, and so to follow him through all weathers and endurances. That great convert, in whom at his conversion faith and love were so abundant, as 1 Tim. 1:14,—his heart, through love to the name of Christ, caused him in the highest passion to utter, 'What mean you to weep and break my heart? for I am not ready to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 21:13. It was love to that name that fired him; yea, his love was wrought up to such an intense degree as he could have wished to have been accursed from Christ for God's glory in the conversion of his brethren, Rom. 9. I wonder how he would have done for patience under that curse, if in hell. But that love which wished that curse would have wrought it; and so thought he, or he would never have wished this. Upon the like account of love to this name, those two apostles 'rejoiced to suffer shame for his name,' as Acts 5:41. Love makes the glorifying of God and Christ, and the will of God, which is always for his glory, dearer than all things to us. Yea, that God should have his will, for his own glory,—'if it be the will of God,' says the Apostle,—of our sufferings, abundantly stills the heart in all. It is true, I may be punished in my afflictions for my sin, and I humble myself for that. But beyond that, it is the good pleasure of God so to have it; and I rejoice in that, says love, that his will is done, as truly that it is done upon me, as that by me. And good is the word of God in both; and hallowed be his name! In that Rom. 8, where, as you heard, 'we are more than conquerors in all these things

through him that loved us,' that love of his to us is alone indeed openly or expressly mentioned, yet withal it is our love to him that tacitly is insinuated to be a concurrent cause therewith; you must take that in too. For the intent of those very words is, that the soul apprehending his love who is that lover,—τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος,—as that word imports, out of a reciprocated love to him again, doth hearten us in the conflict unto this conquest. And yet there is one small word put in that further argues this; it is in ver. 36, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long,'—our lives being in jeopardy every hour,—and 'we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.' And this 'for thy sake' you have in Ps. 44, and he quotes it out from thence; 'As it is written,' says he, 'For thy sake,' &c. Now therefore it is evidently the love that is in us to him, and our cleaving to him therewith, that is there held forth as that which makes us willing to suffer and endure, in that it is for his sake. And although the Apostle in his discourse runs upon the magnifying God's love and Christ's love to us, as that which, apprehended and taken in by us, doth principally work this effect; yet the Psalmist, on the other side, sets out the love of the church to God as the concurrent cause: ver. 17, 'All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.' And, ver. 18–22, 'Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.' If faith and love once but say, It is for thy sake, O God; Why then, says patience, I can bear it, yea, rejoice in it, for his sake that loved me. And look, as the Apostle says he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him, so love can do all things for Christ that loved him, and gave himself for him.

And, to conclude this—

If love to our brethren, which springs from love to God, works so great a patience towards them; as in that scripture, 'Love suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not, rejoiceth not in evil; bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things,' 1 Cor. 13; all which is spoken, as in those words, of our

love to man; though it was our love to God that is urged and spoken of in all the words before, and is the spring of this our love to man. Now if love, I say, unto man works so much patience in things, perhaps, that are yet injurious to us, and not only burdensome, from them,—and in a manner all those elogies of love there do run upon and speak patience; that patience being the proper fruit of that love; what else do suffering long, bearing and enduring all things, with the rest, sound and signify?—then much more, I say, will love unto God, the cause of this love to our brethren, enable us to do the like towards him who can do us no wrong nor hurt, but is holy and righteous in all his works; and all whose ways and goings forth to us are mercy and truth; and for whose sake also it is that we bear so with our brethren; and who hath loved and given his Son for us. It was a great speech of a holy soul, in an unkindly trial from man: That man should deal thus with me, I should have much ado to bear it, (as David said, Ps. 55:12,) but it is God, and I can take anything well at his hands.—And this for the second general head.

SECTION III : What is the Perfect Work of Patience?

3D GENERAL HEAD

What is the perfect work of patience

IN general, a thing then is perfect when all the parts that belong to it are finished. As then the creation of the world is said to be perfect when, as Gen. 2:1, 2, 'The heavens and the earth were finished, and the host of them.' So when all the whole of the work of patience in its several parts, &c., is accomplished, then patience hath its perfect work.

There are four branches of this head that complete it:—

1. Its privative work.
2. Its positive acts.
3. Its positive fruits.
4. Its adjuncts of perfection.

All which go to make patience perfect. And the proofs thereof will confirm every tittle of the fore-part and body of that description I gave of patience, page 438.

First Branch.—Its privative work

I begin with its privative work. And that lies in this: when faith by patience doth mortify turbulent passions that still arise, and are opposites thereto. And as love, when perfect, casts out fear, 1 John 4:18, so then patience is perfect when it expels those contrary passions; or else likewise, too intense thoughts, or porings upon our misery and crosses, so as our minds are chained and tied to those objects, and taken off from all other. I take thoughts in, because Christ says, Luke 24:38, 'Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Why are you troubled?, For when troubles sink deep, they send thoughts up fast; as when weights are hung upon a clock or jack, they make the wheels run swiftly. And so inordinate affections cause an inordinacy of thoughts, and a fixing our minds to one thing; as upon what we have lost, or are like to suffer. Now perfect patience corrects and orders the extravagancies of all these, reduceth a man to possess his own soul; as Christ's phrase is, in Luke 21:19, 'In your patience possess ye your souls,' and thereby to dwell in a man's self; whereas the violence of such affections hurry us out of ourselves, and throw our souls out of doors, that we are not within, or ourselves.

To instance in some particular passions:—

1. Inordinate grief. You know how Job's patience is cried up, and that by our Apostle. For when he suffered the loss of all, both his children and estate, &c., yet he expressed no grief, no trouble at all, that we read of, upon the hearsay and tidings thereof; and sure if there had been any

upon those occasions, the story would have told it, as it doth his other impatiences, which were upon other and higher pressures of another kind, afterwards. But all you read of him upon occasion of those outward losses in chap. 1 is all mere patience and submission to God. 'The Lord,' says he, 'gave, and the Lord hath taken away,'—and it is the Lord who hath done both,—'and blessed be the name of the Lord' for both. And 'in all this charged not God foolishly,' says the last verse.

2. Envy and passionate anger. (1.) Envy, which is apt to rise when others have no such afflictions or losses. As that such and such a one, and of my rank, should escape with his goods, &c., when the loss falls heavy on me, saith the sad heart. This secretly regrets. Good people are greatly apt to this. 'The spirit that is in us'—in us saints—'lusteth to envy.' But God in the end 'gives more grace;' that is, when men are humbled, as there it is said, and broken, which is usually when they have been exercised with great sufferings. The different condition of the holy apostles and some other Christians in those primitive times, gives demonstration of such a patience in this case. There were no men so eminent for sufferings and patience, next the Lord Christ, as the apostles were, who yet viewing other Christians, (as take the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4:8, 9,) how they were full, &c., 'Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us.' It was a city very rich, and the Christians in it had a fulness of outward things when he wrote this; they were full and rich. But as for us, says he, 'God hath set forth us apostles last, as it were appointed to death,' &c. 'Ye are honourable, but we are despised; we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.' And yet he did not at all envy this their fulness in the least. No, he wisheth them all true prosperity: 'Would to God ye did reign,' ver. 8, that is, in true and spiritual respects; he wisheth them all good rather, in all inward enjoyments of God and Christ, together with their outward riches, &c. Now what was it that had so much rooted up envy, &c., in him and the other his fellow-apostles? It was his sufferings and wants, and their being made spectacles to angels and men, as there. This had wrought his and their spirits to this. In the Old Testament, Joshua, though he proved a

man of a choice spirit, yet when he was young in years, and but a young beginner in grace, envy rose up in him, for his good master, Moses' sake. Eldad and Medad prophesy, says he, Num. 11:29; 'but Moses said to him, Enviest thou for my sake?' and so reprov'd him; and thereupon expresseth his own heart thus: 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets; and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!' Now, whence arose this blessed disposition of heart, thus free from envy in him? In the very next chapter you meet with another instance, which gives a true account both of his not envying others, as also in bearing the envy of others against himself, sharpened with the highest provocations unto anger, (which was the 2d,) it being as unkindly as unreasonable. It was the envy of his own only brother and sister, for this, that God had chosen him to utter his mind by unto his people, and reveal himself so as never to any man, as God's testimony of him is in that 12th chapter. Whereupon they had said, ver. 2, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?' Thereupon follows the account, or bottom disposition of spirit, which made him bear both this and the former, ver. 3, 'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.' And so, good man, he would himself have passed this by, and have taken no notice at all of this affront; but that God, it is there said, heard it, as noting that he would not put it up so for Moses' sake. Now what was it that had tamed and made Moses thus meek and calm and passive? Certainly his great afflictions. And his faith, having been exercised thereby, had wrought patience in him: Heb. 11:24, 25, 'By faith he chose rather to suffer affliction,' &c.; and accordingly had lived forty years a mean shepherd, a servile life, an exile, a banished man from Pharaoh's court, honours, and pleasures of it, as an underling, in hardship and durance. And it was a sudden trial, for he fled for his life at an hour's warning, as well as a sore and long trial of forty years; and these sufferings, as great as any man's in that age, made him meek, 'very meek,' which word the Dutch Annotators render 'patient.' The Hebrew word hath affinity with afflictions, saith Ainsworth, which had taught him patience, as sufferings did Christ, whose type he was, Heb. 5:8. These had subdued anger and envy in him unto this so high a degree, and patience had its perfect work. For otherwise we find he could be angry at times, Exod. 11:8, 16:20, 32:19; Lev. 10:16; Num. 16:15, 31:14, 20:10, 11; as Ainsworth hath collected them.

Jesus Christ hath taught us a lesson against this envy, Matt. 20:15, 'Shall I not do what I will with mine own?' Are not all things mine? And wilt thou envy that I have taken them from thee, and not done so from another? 'Shall thine eye be evil, because I am good?' Shall a man be sick that another is in health?

3. Inordinate fears. When too much trouble comes upon us, we use to fear too much at the present; and are apt to project a thousand things for the future, as that poverty and beggary will follow. Many such fears lay hold upon us, because we see God's anger hath begun, and we know not the worst, nor when or where it will end. But, saith Christ, Rev. 2:10, 'Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Faith and faithfulness unto God, or constancy in enduring unto death, he here opposeth to fear; and faith works patience, and patience eats out fear. Fortitude and courage differ from patience in this, that a stout courage in a man of a great spirit will indeed overcome fear, if so be he sees any hope of evading, and so will rouse a man's spirit up to resistance and defence. But patience, though it sees no hope as to this life, yea, nothing but present death before it, it will yet strengthen the heart to bear it, and make a man faithful unto death, and constant, without prevailing fears, even unto death.

4. Murmuring against God. Patience works out that. As in Job, the devil projected his blaspheming: 'He will blaspheme thee to thy face.' He made sure account of it, and would needs turn prophet, and prophesy what Job would do, and that before God. But the devil was befooled, and proved a lying prophet. Job, instead of blaspheming God, blesseth God. 'In all this Job charged not God foolishly.' I may say of it, as in the Revelation twice it is said of the saints, Here was the patience of Job. And it was that patient frame of spirit that God had wrought in him, which the Scripture so extols, that enabled him hereunto.

5. Faith by patience mortifies inordinate cares. Against the times of those great distresses that were to come upon the Jewish nation, and among them upon the Christian Jews in that nation, before the destruction of Jerusalem, which would try every vein in their hearts, Christ gives two special exhortations, besides divers others, Luke 21. The first, 'In your patience'—that is, that patience which is truly Christian and properly

yours—'possess your own souls,' ver. 19. The second, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life'—μέριμναί. Cares do, as the word imports, distract the soul, scatter it into wild thoughts and wandering anxieties. But patience, which Christ first exhorts to, calls all in, and orders all to keep home, and not to stir out of doors abroad; composeth all, so as a man possesseth his own soul. In Phil. 4:6, 7, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God,' &c. I instance likewise for this in the difference of the two grounds in the parable of the sower, Luke 8:14, 15. Of the thorny ground it is said, that 'the word was choked by the cares of the world;' but of the good ground oppositely, that it 'brings forth fruit with patience.' Patience is contrary unto cares, as well as unto unquietness, or to other inordinate affections.

This for patience, its privative work.

Second Branch of the 3d General Head.—Its positive acts

I come, secondly, to positive acts and workings of patience, which are many. To begin with the lowest, and so rise to the higher:—

1. Patience includes and comprehends an act of waiting upon God, and his good pleasure. Waiting is an act of faith continued or lengthened out; and where faith would of itself be short-winded, patience ekes it out. The daughter helps the mother, with an expectation of a happy issue. You find waiting involved in patience as an eminent act thereof, James 5:7, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.' Look, how and in what manner the husbandman waits, so he sets out and exhorts a Christian patient man should do. Mic. 7:7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me,' &c., 'until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me,' &c., ver. 9.

2. It is a waiting with quietness. And that is patience' work too. Patience

is not an enduring simply by force, which we call patience perforce, but with quietness. In Lam. 3, the church, in her doleful condition, expresseth the actings and workings of her own soul; although she speaks in the third person, which is usual in the Scripture, yet she means herself: ver. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.' This was uttered when she was under the yoke, and so was a fruit of patience. Ver. 27, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' It is the nature of faith to quiet the heart in God;—*Fides habet vim quietativam.* Isa. 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.' And, chap. 30:15, 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.' And when faith hath wrought patience, it quiets the heart much more. Patience speaks quietness in the very sound of it; and the reason is because it hath a strength accompanies it, Col. 1:11, 'Strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering.' And thence so far forth as faith and patience do strengthen the heart, so far we are able to bear, and that with quietness. 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' saith Christ, John 14. Why? 'You believe in God, believe also in me.' Faith on them will cause trouble to fly away, which is a great part of Christ's meaning when he says, 'In patience possess your souls,'—that is, dwell quietly in your own spirits, as a man doth in his house, which our law terms his castle.

3. Patience carries on the heart without fainting or discouragement. 'For this cause we faint not.' Isa. 42:4; the meekness and patience of Christ is there first set forth: ver. 2, 'He shall not cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets.' Then follows, ver. 4, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged,'—not be broken, as the Hebrew is,—that is, in spirit, so as to cease from what God had given him to do or suffer; he should go on with his work till he had perfected it.

4. Patience in all sufferings submits to God, and the will of God. The Apostle sedulously puts in 'if it be the will of God,' when he had occasion to mention their sufferings, and he doth it twice: 1 Peter 3:17, 'If it be the will of God that ye suffer;' and chap. 4:19, 'Wherefore let him that suffers according to the will of God,' &c. And in chap. 1:6, 'If need be,' that is, if God see it requisite to bring them on you. And the Apostle would needs bring these clauses in, though by way of parenthesis; so in two of these

places mentioned. The stronger the sufferings are, the stronger is the will of God in bringing those sufferings. And it is patience in the soul that works the heart to submission to that will, Ps. 39:9, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.' Then, when he confessed his sin of Bathsheba and murdering Uriah, he considered not the wrong done them, in comparison of that he had done against God therein. 'Against thee, against thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,' Ps. 51. And now, when a retaliation for that sin, in the rebellion of his own son Absalom, came upon him, and Shimei had likewise bitterly cursed and reviled him,—which some latter expositors have deemed to have been the occasions of that psalm,—he in like manner, in this his punishment, layeth aside the consideration of all instruments that had brought those evils on him, whoever they were, whether it were these or some other, and looks only unto God, and submits, 'because thou hast done it.' And though he confesseth that he was in a fume at first, notwithstanding his fixed resolution to have been dumb as for speaking anything that should savour of murmuring before men; yet his flesh and corruption boiled within him, as that useth to rise and work in us first: so ver. 2, 3, 'I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good: and my sorrow was stirred,' or my distemper wrought the more. 'My heart was hot within me, whilst I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.' And what he spake savours of a man weary of life itself. For he would needs know of God when his life should be at end; thus, ver. 4, 'so impatient was he.' Yea, but then when his grace came more deeply and thoroughly to be stirred, and patience to have its perfect work, he then considers God's hand alone in it; how that it was he had stirred up the spirits of these wicked ones against him, and found that himself had to do with God alone. And then he was dumb and silent indeed to purpose. And truly his heart at that time, if the occasion were that of Shimei and Absalom, had been wrought up into as blessed a frame of submission to God as ever before or after, in all his lifetime, as his words in that chapter before mentioned do declare, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26, 'And David said, If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it,—viz., the ark,—and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' He herein perfectly gives up himself to God's good pleasure. And it is as if he had said, If it be good in his eyes so to deal, it shall be so in

mine; I wholly give myself up unto whatever his design sign is upon me. Yea, he casts away himself into the supposition of God's having no delight in him; which is the most afflicting supposition a godly man can make to himself of all other; so perfectly did his will apply itself to God's will. He had professed his waiting on God just before in that psalm, 'Now, Lord, what do I wait for? my hope is in thee.' And now he adds, 'I am dumb,' so for the present; and, 'I will be dumb,' so for the future: I will never open my mouth about it. Piscator and the Dutch Annotator read it thus, in both tenses.

5. Patience makes a man not dumb only, or not to open his mouth through submission, but it makes him put his mouth in the dust; whereby a deeper humiliation and submission is yet expressed. It is a further humiliation to lie at God's feet with his face on the dust, which is as low as the person can go: that if God will tread and trample upon him, there he is; and in that posture presents and declares himself ready for that, or any dispensation from God. Lam. 3, the church did not only wait, ver. 25, and 'wait quietly,' ver. 26, and then 'sit down' and 'keep silence,' ver. 28, but did 'put her mouth in the dust,' ver. 29.

But you will say, All this was done when the soul had hope, as appears in those words in that Lam. 3:26, 'It is good that a man should hope and wait quietly;' and, ver. 29, 'He puts his month in the dust, if so be there may be hope.' And, indeed, David, in the 39th Psalm, and likewise in these places cited of him out of Samuel, had hope concerning that particular thing he yet submitted unto God in, as at the 7th verse of that psalm appears: 'And now, Lord, what do I wait for? my hope is in thee;' and then mentions the deliverance wherein his hope lay, in ver. 8–10. And thus when Shimei cursed him, his soul in like manner did gather up hope the more upon it that God would bless him: 2 Sam. 16:12, 'It may be the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.' But yet, I confess, his hope there, and the church's before, did each rise up but to an 'it may be.'

6. But gospel patience, sixthly, will work an effect, when there is no hope, as to the things and concernments of this life, David and the church said, 'If there may be hope;' but patience will say, If there be no hope—that is, in this life—that ever I should come out of this trouble. I differenced

patience from Christian fortitude before by this. The apostles did put, primitive Christians over to the day of the restitution of all things, and the refreshing that should be then. Thus, James 5:7, 8, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' As if he had said, As for your pressures, I can give you no hope of release out of them during this life; but let your hearts fixedly make account of no other outward refreshment but that which shall be then by the coming of Christ, which will be spiritual in glory. And his similitude of the husbandman's waiting for the harvest declares thus much: ver. 7, 'Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth,' &c. Poor man, he doth not reap this precious fruit of the earth until the harvest. He parts with precious seed, and as unto him, it is until the harvest-time as good as lost. The Psalmist hath the same comparison, 'They sow precious seed, and they go weeping,' as loath to part with it, 'but shall return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.' Brethren, there is a harvest a-coming, and joy sown for the upright in heart, against that time. It is now but sown, but must come up one day. But although the husbandman in all appearance looks upon all as lost until the harvest; yet, however, he hath before then, in the meanwhile, the early and the latter rain: and they give hope of a harvest, whilst he sees and finds God blessing and following his corn with rain upon his ground. This as to the husbandman's hope, which is the Apostle's similitude. And as to the Christian's hope, I understand by the early and latter rain, according to the course of the similitude, to be signified those illapses from heaven, those refreshing bedewments which the Holy Ghost vouchsafeth all along to such an expectant's soul, as earnest of heaven, and pledges of God's certain intending to give him his expected harvest, according to the proportion of his patience and waiting. But still all these hopes wholly respect that other life; but as to this life, the Apostle gives no other hopes for them. Nor no more doth the Apostle to the Hebrews, chap. 10:36, whilst he thus speaks, 'Ye have need of patience,' even to the end of your lives; for it follows, 'that after you have done the will of God, you may inherit the promises.' Still you will need patience to your very last. We use to speak the same to a man whose case is remediless: You had need of patience, for your condition is not like to

be bettered. These had suffered the spoiling of their goods already, ver. 33, and had 'endured a great fight of afflictions,' as there. Well, but the storm is not yet over: you have need of patience still, you are never like to have your goods and estates again, and I can give you, says he, no other hope but that you would patiently wait for the restitution of all things, which is to be at the day of judgment; for so it follows, ver. 37, 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' And therefore 'cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward,' ver. 35. So that all the hope in this life is, that the time will not be long.

7. A seventh act or work of patience is, it causeth the soul to sanctify God in a man's heart, all sorts of ways. I shall still instance, as I have done, more specially in Job's carriage, whose patience is so cried up by our Apostle. When his outward losses of children, &c., had their full accomplishment, and the sad tidings thereof had filled his ears and heart, chap. 1, by messenger after messenger, till he had no more to lose, the text tells us, ver. 20, 'He fell down on the ground, and worshipped.' He had been frequent in worshipping before, and that upon occasion of his children, that they might not sin, so you read, ver. 5; but all those, his foregone worship, sacrifices, and prayers, could not prevail with God to preserve them, nor his goods neither. But now when they are all gone, the first thing he does is, he falls down and worships.

Quest.—What may that contain in it?

Ans.—I shall limit myself unto what his speech thereupon doth utter, and the posture of his worshipping doth signify, both plainly shewing what was in his heart that moved him so to do, and moved within him in the doing it.

1. He adores God in his sovereignty, both in his falling down, as also in those words, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken.' He is Lord, says he, the Lord of all. All was his own; and shall he not do what he will with his own? as Matt. 20:15. I am the clay, he is the potter. He is the Lord of me, and all. Job had prayed for his sons, as we did for the city, so far as he had then in his view what might then concern them; but for all his good prayers for them, God took them away by a violent death: and

herein God seemeth angry with his prayers, as with ours for the city; yet Job begins to worship him afresh, and adores him after all. And it was the first thing he applied himself unto. Faith and patience will cause the heart to apply itself to God in all sorts of dealings, and will vent and utter gracious dispositions some way or other. And to adore God, which was most suitable to this condition he was in, is a higher act than to pray, simply considered, though it be done mostly in prayer. And as thus at first, so he retained this practice and principle all along, although he did grow very unquiet when his sins and God's wrath came in upon him. Yet however impatient he otherwise were, he still afterwards continued in this manner to adore, and fall down before God at times. Thus, in chap. 23:11, 12, you shall see how this poor man falls down before God, and submits to him. He first professeth his integrity, at ver. 10, and his faith as to the issue of his trials, that all would be for good: 'He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps,' &c. As if he had said. But yet for all he knew my holy walking with him, his resolution and design upon me, thus to try me, went on. And all my prayers beforehand could not turn him therefrom, as follows ver. 13, 14, 'But he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth: for he performeth the thing that is appointed for me;'—what is my lot from him, as this was, I must take it and submit to it;—'and many such things are with him,' many such strange and wonderful unusual dealings are with him, and we must magnify him in all. It is God's sovereignty, you see, which he here adores and falls down before. And this passage you may set upon the score of those eminent speeches wherein he expressed his patience, which the Scripture commends it for; and in the issue of his worst fits, we find him still adoring and submitting to God.

2. Secondly, he humbles himself to the dust, falls down to the ground. First, as himself was a creature, poor and emptied of all. Alas! what am I, says he, or what have I to challenge or assume to myself as mine? What have I, or am I, that I have not received? A poor naked thing I came into the world at first; and but as poor and naked am I now, when bereft of all my goods; and as naked I must return. I had nothing at first, and I have but nothing now, and I shall carry nothing with me into the other world. Thus spake he.

When Jacob was in hazard of, and thought he should lose his goods, and children, and all, as Job here actually lost both, see how beforehand he humbles and debaseth himself,—as you read in Gen. 32:10,—and how greatly, before the Lord: 'I am less than the least of thy mercies.' I am not worthy of a bit of bread, and thou gavest me all I have. And what was I once? He considers, as Job, his original condition, both as to matter of estate and children. I came over Jordan but with this staff; I had no more, says he, and now I have two bands, both of cattle and children. And if God take all, I am but where I was, and where he once found me. And truly Jacob's best policy and design was to have compounded the matter, and if he could but save half of either, ver. 8; if he might have half his estate, and half his children, he should have been, considering the hazard of all, something well appeased: but now he puts in with God for the whole. His thus humbling of himself was before he had lost anything, to the end to preserve it, and Job's was when he had lost all; but both express the same humility.

And as you find him here humbled, as a poor creature, as poor as ever any was; so elsewhere as deeply broken for his being a sinner, and professing himself to be as naked and empty in respect of any righteousness of his own, or of anything he had to stand upon in the sight of God. The great Apostle doth not mere divest himself thereof, in Phil. 3, than holy Job doth in chap. 9:2, 'I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.' And yet more deeply and expressly, ver. 20, 21, 'If I justify myself, mine own mouth'—I sinning in all my speeches, and even in this now whilst I speak it—'shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.' His meaning further is, Had I never so perfect an inherent holiness, yet if I come before God to be justified, 'I know not mine own soul,' as he there adds; that is, I look at nothing in my own soul, I utterly renounce all in it: yea, 'I would despise my life;' that is, all that holiness I have in the course of my life exercised, and had in me, I despise it, I count it dross and dung. Though as for an integrity, in point of sanctification, he stood upon his points with God himself.

We find other saints in their distresses to have been patient in the sense of their sins. I might instance in David, how he humbled himself in that

great distress which we spake of, and which silenced him so, as you heard in that fore-cited Psalm 39. 'Deliver me from all my transgressions,' saith he, ver 8. The remembrance of those struck him dumb before God; for that speech immediately follows, ver. 9. So the church, Mic. 7:9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, for I have sinned against him.'

3. A third act comprehended in Job's worshipping God is his blessing God, as his words therewith also uttered shew; which blessed frame and disposition of spirit his faith by patience had wrought in him upon this occasion. Lo! his high sufferings cause him to bless the Lord. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord,' says he. He blesseth him that he had given him at first, and that he had afforded him those blessings of children and goods so long. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken; blessed,' &c. And he was thankful for that; and thought it but reasonable that if he received good, he should also receive evil, as the pleasure of God was, chap. 2:10. He blesseth God, also, because he found that God had blessed him with such things and blessings heavenly, which could not be taken away. He found the love of God the same still. It is a sure rule, we never bless God but when we find that God blesseth us first; as we do not love God, but because God loves us first. Now when the soul finds that in afflictions and tentations God doth bless it, this draws out from the soul a blessing of God again. And then doth the soul say, It is not only the will of my Father, and therefore shall I not drink the cup he gives me? but it is the blessing of my Father, and shall not I bless him for it? 'In everything give thanks,' saith the holy Apostle, 1 Thess. 5:18; that is, whatever the condition be, still there is matter of thanks, and so of blessing God.

Third Branch of the 3d General Head.—The fruits of patience

These the Apostle terms the peaceable, quiet fruits of righteousness, which chastening yieldeth, after ye have been exercised thereby, Heb. 12, and that is through patience gained by those afflictions.

1. The first fruit; it works contentment, a holy contentment; and that adds a perfection to the other former works of this grace, Phil. 4:11, 12, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer

need.' And he had learned it, as Christ learned his obedience, through sufferings; and by his having run through so great a variety of conditions. A man may be content when he is not fully satisfied. When God frames a man's estate to his will, then he is satisfied; as, Ps. 17:14, 'whose belly thou fillest with thy hidden treasure.' But to be content is another thing. It is not when I have an estate according to my will, but my will is brought to my estate; and then I have as much content in that as in the greatest estate; for life, says Christ,—that is, the comfort of life,—lies not in abundance. It is true, such a man would choose rather, as the Apostle speaks, a full estate; yet patience boweth his judgment to such an approbation of his present condition as that which is best for him, as being that which out of God's judgment and wisdom is allotted to him; he so bends his will unto such a correspondency with God's will as he rests content.

2. A second fruit of patience is self-sufficiency; the word is so, 1 Tim. 6:6, 'But godliness with contentment is great gain.' The word μετ' αὐταρκείας, translated 'contentment,' is a more reaching word by far. To say 'contentment,' that is too bare and scant a word; but this more amply signifies 'self-sufficiency.' In 2 Cor. 9:8, the same word is there translated sufficiency, but still in the Greek it hath 'self' added to 'sufficiency,' which imports a sufficiency within a man's self that he needs not go abroad for anything; he is sufficiently supplied from what is within. The words of that verse are, 'And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all self-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:' which let us consider.

It is true that in the word 'all grace' he includes an outward grace, of giving such an abundance of external blessings as they might 'always' and 'in all things' have enough for themselves, and to spare; yea, to abound in every good work to others. But yet the main of that grace he centres in is an inward self-sufficiency in a man's own heart, as without which they would never have satisfaction at home, much less a heart to scatter abroad; but a man's natural self-unsufficiency, as oppositely I call it, would make his heart clung and narrow, never contented in himself, much less abounding to others, though he had all the whole world. So as indeed that is the grace which the Apostle puts the weight upon; that is

the grace he predicates.

So as the inference or corollary, as to our purpose, from thence may justly be: that if, on the other hand, a true Christian be in never so great want, or fallen into a condition of extreme poverty, comparatively either unto what himself once had, which is the case of many a good soul now, or unto others who still abound; yet if God give him this 'all grace' of inward self-sufficiency, he may be, and is still, as content and sufficient within himself as those in that abounding condition which the Apostle wisheth unto those Corinthians.

And the reason is, that the self-sufficiency of him that hath the most of such things lies not in those things, but depends utterly upon that inward grace spoken of, or that inward frame of Spirit, which this grace composeth his soul unto.

And this is evident from that place to Timothy first cited, where it is that the Apostle useth the same word on purpose to comfort the saints, that were in a scant and bare condition as to this world, as the coherence of ver. 6–8 shews. 'Godliness with self-sufficiency,' says he, 'is great gain,' even virtually as much, yea, infinitely more, than gaining all the world, as Christ's speech is, which, moreover, is spoken with a connexion to these words; 'for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we carry nothing out.' And therefore, if we have nothing but 'food and raiment, let us therewith be content;' so it follows. And for so much God hath undertaken.

And the holy Apostle verifies this in himself, that he had learned thus to be as content when he wanted as when he abounded. And in this frame we find elsewhere his mind to have been in the midst of all, not wants only, but pressures of all sorts; which also shews that patience and endurance through sufferings had been his tutors and instructors thereunto. For in 2 Cor. 6, he having first reckoned up his sufferings, ver. 4, and made a catalogue of them, then in his final conclusions, ver. 10, he sums up the frame of his spirit all in this: 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.' In which few words he compendiously speaketh what either out of that to the Corinthians, chap. 9, I have now insisted on,

or that paradox in my text doth amount unto. For those words, 'as sorrowful' in respect of divers temptations, 'yet always rejoicing,' are all one with 'count it all joy when ye fall into divers tentations,' as in the text. And his 'having nothing, yet possessing all things' there, is adequate and equivalent to the Corinthians' supposed outward 'abounding always, and in all things.' But then his 'being poor, yet making many rich,' therein he exceeded and transcended what they, or any the most liberal-hearted rich man that ever was in the world could boast of, in any of their or his abounding in any or every good or charitable work, in relief to others. So we see it is possible and attainable that a Christian may in the want of all have an all-self-sufficiency, superabounding the fulness of him in outward things who aboundeth most. And all this was the fruit of his patience, and continual abiding under sufferings. For he speaks this of himself, whilst he is enumerating his sufferings, which in that chapter he doth at large. Thus perfect will patience make you, that, as here the Apostle in my text speaks, you shall want nothing, even in outward things, when you have lost all.

If you ask me, Whence hath a Christian this self-sufficiency within himself, and wherein lies it?—

I answer, If God and Christ dwell in the heart; if I have the earnest of the Spirit for my salvation, or am partaker of his holiness, and that grace which accompanies salvation; and do delight in the will and glory of God, and in pleasing him, and the like to these; then I have a self-sufficiency within me. If, as in 1 John 4:16, 'we have known and believed the love that God hath to us: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him,'—then we have all within ourselves; and is like as a man that hath all provisions in and about his own house so plentifully as he needs not go forth for anything; so is it, and will it be, with us.

3. A third fruit is joy: Col. 1:11, 'Strengthened with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' You have it also in the text, 'count it all joy,' &c. And, Rom. 5:3, 'We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.'

You will say to me, How can this be? Doth not the Apostle say, Heb. 12:11, 'No chastening seems to be for the present joyous, but grievous;' and our

Saviour, 'You shall weep when the world shall rejoice;' and many the like?

I give these answers:—

First, The object of your joy is not simply your afflictions. No, no man can delight in them alone; they, indeed, are grievous, thus saith the Apostle. But your joy lies in looking unto what is the issue and event, the end and reward of your trials by them; and that is it you are to count the matter of your joy, and all joy. To rejoice in the thing, or the affliction itself, is one thing; and to rejoice in the expectation of the event and issue, is another.

Then, secondly, if you observe it, the word in the text is favourable: says he, 'count it all joy;' that is, esteem it so. He doth not say, you shall have all joy at present, but though you have not, you may count it all joy,—that is, you may reckon it as matter of all joy, as many interpreters paraphrase the words,—and so reason yourselves into joy in your judgments, and so esteem it all joy, appretiative, as the school speaks, though the passion of joy be wanting.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ himself, when he did endure the cross, and whilst he hung upon it, and likewise before, whilst within the garden, he was not in a joyous frame of spirit at that present as to the passion of joy; nay, his soul was heavy unto death that while. Yet it is said, Heb. 12:1, that 'for the joy that was set before him he did endure the cross,' &c.; and he therein is set forth as an example unto us, in the same verse, 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus,' &c. It is well if you look to the joy set before you, as that which you certainly expect to come, although you want the passion of joy in that which you expect to come.

Fourthly, You may perhaps not rejoice at present with great joy, yet afterwards, through much exercise of patience, it may grow up in you. And this answer the Apostle himself gives in that Heb. 12, distinguishing between what for 'the present,' and what for 'afterwards,' in time: ver. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' And upon the hopes of that he bids them to lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble

knees.

Yet, fifthly, Some Christians have had, and you may have, actual joy at that present in the midst of your afflictions. Those two, great trials and great joys, may well meet and stand together in the heart at once, as in divers respects; for the Apostle hath reconciled these two, 1 Pet. 1:6, 'Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' That speech, 'wherein ye greatly rejoice,' reacheth and riseth higher than to an accounting it matter of joy about what is to come, but doth further absolutely speak of joy for the present. And therefore to have the affection of inward joy itself greatly raised up, and yet at that instant, in the same 'now' as he speaks, in outward respects to be in heaviness, are compatible. And, Col. 1:11, the Apostle speaks of such a glorious power accompanying the saints in trials as shall work 'patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' And why else doth the Apostle also say, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice?' He contents not himself to have said it once, as if to have them rejoice a little, but he professeth, to say it again, because they should rejoice abundantly, and this 'always,' and therefore in all times and in all conditions. Of the co-existence of which two himself proposeth himself an example: 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.'

Fourth Branch of the 3d General Head.—Some eminent properties or adjuncts of patience, which, added, do make it and its work perfect

1. When a man's spirit is brought to do these things with ease, so as he shall not need to chide his spirit into a patient frame, nor force himself into it, but like as Ezra is said to be a ready scribe, Ezra 7:6,—that is, he was perfect at his work, Ms heart was prepared for it and inured to it, ver. 10,—thus patience hath had a perfect work when it frames the heart to a readiness to these actings before mentioned. Thus the Apostle, Acts 21:13, 'I am not only ready to be bound, but I am ready to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.' His heart was so fully prepared as he stuck not at all at it; yea, it was a heart-breaking to him that his friends should offer to dissuade him: 'What mean you to break my heart?' &c. It was his being inured to endurance and patience that had begotten that habit of it in him; his heart was not to seek for it.

2. A second adjunct or property which adds a perfection to all these is when the practice of it is durable, and hath some constancy in it.

As, first, not by fits only. That was Jonah's fault. Oh, he was a broken, humble man when in the whale's belly; but how outrageous when out! In Moses, patience had its perfect work, in respect of the constant exercise of that grace, and therefore it was he had the honour to be styled the meekest man on earth; and truly it was not that meekness of his natural temper, nor merely as a moral virtue in him, for which he is so extolled, though these might contribute thereto, but it was a grace that was spiritual in him, the grace of meekness, and consequently of patience, which the Holy Ghost had wrought in him, and which he by sufferings had learned. And my reason, among others, principally is, that he was a type of Christ therein, according as God's promise was to raise up a prophet like unto Moses; like, as in other eminencies, so especially in this grace; for which, as Moses is commended there, so Christ in the Evangelists, and therein proposeth himself as an example, 'Learn of me, for I am meek,' &c. Now, how constantly did Moses bear all along with that perverse, murmuring, and rebelling nation, both against God and himself, with an invincible patience, and still interceded for them; and thus Christ doth with us, and for us. And although we read how Moses was and could be sometimes angry, yea, exceeding wroth, as the words are, (whereof I gave the collection out of Ainsworth,) yet it was often in God's cause, and still but so as the usual and constant frame of his spirit was otherwise, for which he had that renowned denomination, and never was greatly out or overcome with impatience, we read of, but once, Num. 20:10, 11, compared with Psalm 106:32, 33.

Secondly, Patience is then perfect when it continues to the end. As a colour is said to be perfect when it is durable, as a dye in grain, or as the India colours, which, while the cloth remains, they endure. Now it is he that endures to the end, Matt. 24, that shall be saved. You shall therefore find that unto patience, long-suffering is added in two several places: Col. 1, 'Strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering.' Patience there respects the weight or grievousness and heaviness of the affliction we are under; and long-suffering respects the duration and time. The other is in an instance of the Apostle of himself, 1 Tim. 3:10, 'Thou hast known my

long-suffering, charity, patience.' In James 5:7, it is said of the husbandman, whose case is made the persuasive unto patience, he 'hath long patience' This is a perfection indeed, to bear long, and to the end: 'Be thou faithful to death,' Rev. 2:10. To carry a great burden a quarter of an hour is an effect of some patience, but to carry it a day, or more, or for a week, there is long-suffering. Why is it said that when you have done the will of God, you have need of patience, but because still, in the last part of your life, after an active life for a long while ran through, even then when you are near the promise, your patience may be then at last most of all put to it?

3. A third property or requisite to perfect patience is, that it be universal; which his either when a man hath been every way tried, and hath passed through all sorts of tentations, or when he hath still come off with patience in some good measure in all those wherein he hath been tried, although his trials have not been of all sorts. A man's natural spirit will help him to be patient in some things, but in other things his heart is weak, and cannot bear. Oh! not such a cross, of any other. But it is certain, as God tried Abraham in his Isaac, so God will the sons of Abraham in what is dearest to them, and yet enable them to bear it, as 1 Cor. 10, and go through therewith. Hence in the epistles you meet with all added to patience and long-suffering, both when patience is prayed for, as Col. 1, and exhorted unto, as 2 Tim. 4:2. But though this universality is to be prayed for and exhorted unto, as that which makes it perfect; yet it is well if, in the great trials of our lives, we come off with some patience suitable, and from henceforth resolve with endurance so to do: and so much is expected. And it may seem strange that many that should be able to bear great trials between God and them with much quietness and submission, are yet easily disadvantaged upon smaller occasions between men and them; for which some reasons might be given.

SECTION IV: If Any of You Lack Wisdom

ALTHOUGH I have despatched the subject I first intended, yet I find myself obliged to proceed a little further in the opening ver. 5, in order unto a relieving against a great discouragement, which I know hath, or may have been, in many readers' hearts, whilst I have been thus discoursing these great things about the perfect work of patience, &c.; and also to leave behind me the most apposite direction how to obtain this patience, in the perfect work of it: and I will not go out of my text for these things neither.

AN EXPOSITION OF THE 5TH VERSE

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

The discouragement I know is: Oh, how remote are and have our hearts been from this perfect work of patience! which yet some saints have in so great a measure attained, as those great examples given have shewn, both of saints out of the Old and New Testaments. What then shall I think of myself for the present? will such a soul say; or for the future, what shall I do?

Why, truly, God hath provided sufficiently in the text for answer to these queries and complaints of yours, whereby both to relieve you against your discouragement at your want of the exercise of these things, and also to direct you to the most proper and effectual, if not the only means to obtain them.

1. As to this present discouragement about your want, and so great falling short of this hitherto, which you are so sensible of, those first words in the text, 'If any of you lack wisdom,' will be found greatly speaking to your relief therein.
2. As to a direction what you should do for the future to obtain it, those other words, 'Let him ask of God,' point us to the most proper and effectual remedy and way of supply in the case.

3. With this great encouragement added, first drawn from the nature of God, 'Ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;' then seconded with this promise, 'and it shall be given him.'

Of these three heads in what follows, briefly:—

I.—To the discouragement

The opening of these words, 'If any of you lack wisdom,' will greatly conduce to ease your heart as to that; the effect of which is, that the Apostle plainly supposeth that true believers may both really, and in their own apprehensions especially, be found greatly lacking in point of patience when trials do befall them. And this I am sure hath reason to relieve you in what is like to be the great discouragement that usually falls out.

This to be the supposition of the Apostle is made good by opening four things:—

1. That by 'wisdom' here is plainly meant patience, together with the perfect work of it which he had spoken of.
2. That he speaks this unto those that were true believers; 'if any of you.'
3. How it may or can be said that true believers, who have all grace and the principles thereof in them, lack such or such a grace.
4. The intimate reason and occasion upon which the Apostle utters himself in this supposition; 'if any,' &c.

For the first; wisdom sometimes is taken largely for all grace and gracious actings whatsoever; sometimes strictly for a particular grace. To find out the difference of which, the measure is to be taken from the scope of the place where either of these is mentioned. Now wisdom, in this place, is to be taken strictly; that is, for that particular grace, or piece of gracious wisdom, whereby to know how to be able to manage a man's self under trials, especially great, sore, and sudden ones, patiently; which is done when we have taken in and digested by faith such principles as our Christianity affords plenty of, as grounds that instruct and enable the soul

joyfully to entertain such trials and tentations, and to endure and go through them with a constancy of joy. For look, as the word 'grace' is taken either strictly or largely; that is, either for all grace, and yet again for any or every particular grace, each of which is called grace also: 'As ye abound in every grace, so ye abound in this grace also;' thus, all grace is called wisdom in a large sense, as usually throughout the Book of Proverbs, but withal a particular grace is called wisdom too, as the third chapter of this epistle, ver. 13, shews. The grace of meekness shewn in speech and conversation, he styles it 'meekness of wisdom,' or a 'wise meekness,' or a meekness accompanied with and proceeding out of wisdom. And thus Calvin and most others understand wisdom here in this my text of this special grace; the scope and coherence with the former words carrying it thereunto. True patience being from such a wisdom as whereby the soul hath the skill and ability to manage a man's self patiently under tentations, to such an issue as that patience should have a perfect work in us; and unto this it is here to be restrained; for this grace it is he had been, and still is, discoursing of.

And there is a special and more peculiar reason why this skill of patience should be styled wisdom in a more eminent sense. For what he had before uttered of rejoicing in afflictions and tentations, and exhorted unto, that patience should have its perfect work; these things being the hardest lessons in Christianity, do therefore need and require the highest principles of divine wisdom, both doctrinal and practical, to be deeply inlaid and fixed in the soul, so as to bow and frame the heart unto a real practice and willing performance of such dictates and conformity thereunto. For then it is that knowledge is termed wisdom; and for that reason it is that our whole religion is styled wisdom, because it rests not in bare notional knowledge, which is a differing thing from wisdom, but makes men proportionably wise to the practice of the things in which it instructs. And particularly this skill of enduring tentations, such as hath been described, doth deserve this style more eminently, for it so far outvies, and is above the sphere of all principles, whether of philosophy or what other profession or professors of patience whatsoever, who whilst, in a sullen patience, for all of theirs was no better, they professed to be wise, they became foolish; and Christianity infinitely outshoots them in what they most gloried in.

Secondly, That he speaks this to them whom he supposeth true believers, and unto them as such, is evident; although at the first blush, as we say, the words would seem to point at and speak to unregenerate men who wholly want all true wisdom and grace; and so the drift should be an intended direction to or for such to seek true grace, which they lack, at the hands of God, by prayer.

But the coherence manifestly shews that he speaks to such whom he supposeth to be already true believers. For in the next words he exhorts the same persons whom he speaks to in these words, to 'ask in faith;' and therefore supposeth them to have true faith already whom he directs this exhortation unto. And otherwise it had been more proper, yea, requisite to have exhorted them, if he had intended it of unregenerate men, first to seek faith itself, and then out of faith and in that faith to seek for this wisdom, or grace of endurance. And again he speaks to them that were brethren; so he calls them; and in this passage says, 'if any of you,' and such who, being true professors of Christianity, were exposed unto those sundry tentations from persecutions especially. And it is such also whom he exhorts to 'count it all joy,' &c., and here to ask a wisdom of God whereby to be able to suffer for their holy profession. Furthermore, this wisdom lying in patience having its perfect work in them, it supposeth the persons such as had some work of patience and of other graces begun in them already. And, indeed, to have exhorted unregenerate men, that were as yet utterly destitute of all grace, and so out of harm's way as to any sufferings from the gospel, and to direct them to make this the first of their addresses to God, and of their requests, that they might be able to endure tentations, and that patience should have a perfect work in them, and so to have taught them that which is the hardest lesson in Christianity before they had learned the first letters thereof; this had been utterly improper, and a lesson at too great a distance for men in their natural state first to learn.—Thus much for the persons, viz., that he speaks it unto men already regenerate, and supposed in the faith.

The third thing proposed was, How it could be he should speak in this manner of believers, that they should lack this grace of wisdom; whenas, if such, they must be supposed to have all true graces in them; why then should he yet say, even of them, 'If any of you lack,' &c.?

Ans.—This expression, to say such and such a Christian 'lacks' such or such a grace, is not uncouth nor unusual in the Scriptures, when he or they have wanted the exercise of it. For though Christians do receive the principles of all graces, as 2 Pet. 1:3, yet they may neglect to stir up all graces, or may have been disused to the exercise of some. Why else, and to what end, doth the Apostle in the same place stir them up to add grace to grace, as in ver. 5? And in those cases a Christian may be said, yea, charged to lack that grace or graces which he wants the exercise of. For so in the same chapter, ver. 9, speaking of a dozed, negligent professor, though true, he useth this very language of him, 'He that lacks these things,' as I have elsewhere opened that Scripture. For *idem est non esse, et non uti*;—it is all one for a thing not to be, and not to be used, when the being of a thing is wholly ordained for use and operation. Now such a thing is grace; and such a thing, if not used, is as if it were not. And the opposition that is between adding grace to grace, ver. 5,—that is, the exercise of one grace after another,—and the lacking grace, in that ver. 9, evidently shews that phrase to be so understood, not of the utter want of the grace, but of the exercise.

The fourth thing is, the intimate reason or occasion whereupon the Apostle doth utter himself in such a supposition; 'If any of you lack.'

This will appear by considering these three things:—

First, In respect that he had exhorted to so hard and difficult a practice; to 'count it all joy,' &c.; which requireth such high principles to be drunk in, about the good and benefit of tentations, in the issue and end of them; which principles must also have been thoroughly concocted in their hearts first who shall attain to this.

And, secondly, there being many poor souls, as of such that were weak, and some new converts, amongst them whom he wrote to, who might, and did then, as many now-a-days, that yet are sincere-hearted, in the sense of their own, weakness, find and apprehend themselves so far off and remote from such high principles and attainments, and therefore, upon his this discoursing, were like to be utterly discouraged; thinking with themselves, judging themselves by the present frame of their infirm spirits, both that their hearts had never yet, nor would ever be, wrought

up to this pitch. What, to count it all joy! think they; is that it you exhort us unto? Alas! our hearts tremble at the very thoughts of entering into such sudden and so great tentations as you here forewarn us of. And of all graces else, it is this of a patient suffering frame, and strength of spirit thereto, that is and hath been our want. This is it we 'lack,' nor do we know how to manage ourselves wisely under such trials, so as to glorify God; yea, and not shamefully to dishonour him. Nay, if we should fall into such trials and sufferings, we are liker utterly to fall away under them, rather than to rejoice when we fall into them.

Further, thirdly, there might be many strong Christians, as to the active part of the life of Christianity, who yet might be to seek as fresh soldiers at the first, when such trials come unexpectedly, and thick and threefold upon them; and that they fall into them as downfalls and precipices. And in this dreadful a manner he had set them out to them, as impendent on them, as was opened. And even such Christians, being surprised, might be at a loss at first, in respect of that confidence of spirit to bear them, till by prayer and faith recollecting themselves, they should anew obtain or regain this wisdom. Even strong Christians are apt to be stounded at first, as men are with a great blow, and cannot well stand or keep their ground.

Now unto such, either of these, doth the Apostle in this language, 'If any of you lack,' apply himself, and therein speaks to their very hearts; but especially to the first sort of weak Christians. And, indeed, speaks their very fears, and most inward thoughts and apprehensions, they had or might have of themselves; and so utters their misgivings of heart in their own language. Oh, I lack these things, says the soul. 'If any of you lack,' says the Apostle. And it is no small comfort to such to hear an apostle, from the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to suppose that very true and sincere Christians may thus be lacking and thus surprised.

Thus as to the removal of their main discouragement, which was the first thing proposed.

II.—The direction

Let him ask of God.—Having thus spoken their hearts, as to the fears and apprehensions of themselves in respect of their falling short of this high

duty of joy and patience, &c., he now directs them to the most proper and sovereign means for the obtaining of it of all other, and that is faithful, instant prayer: 'Let him ask of God,' &c.

And herein also he speaks the hearts of all true Christians also, even of the weakest; whose refuge in all their wants is to cry to God for a supply of what they lack, especially when they feel, or are apprehensive of their lack and want in any grace that should help them in time of need. And look, what effectual supply of this grace in tentations all the Apostle's persuasions alone would not have effected, that, faith venting itself in constant and fervent prayer, will bring in and obtain; and their hearts will in the end be raised and wrought up unto, so as they shall be able to abound in this grace also. Weak faith, when it cannot find in its heart to suffer, or so much as to enter into trials, can yet pray; and so doth beg with desires unutterable to have thus grace, to be able to suffer these trials in this joyful manner the Apostle exhorts us unto. And the weak heart continuing so to pray and importune God, in the end this shall be given him; as here he promiseth. I shall not enlarge on this further. For when an apostle shall single forth a means, and that one single one, whereby to obtain any eminent grace one needs, that means ought to be with all diligence put into use and practice; and so there needs no more to urge it.

Only observe how in this directive part he puts them not upon praying chiefly to have tentations and trials averted or kept off, nor to ask deliverance out of them, though that is lawful and may be done; not a word of these in this his exhortation; but he draws the main and great intention of their souls unto praying for grace, how to be patient and joyful, &c.—This as to the direction.

III.—His encouragements to pray

His encouragements, that by seeking a believer shall obtain, are drawn, first, from that gracious wont and disposition of God, that giveth to all men liberally, &c.

1. As being a God 'that giveth to all men.' And this also is to be limitedly understood of all those men who thus do, have, or shall apply themselves

unto God by faithful and importunate prayer. For he had said first, 'Let him ask of God;' and therefore God's giving here must be supposed to be a giving to him that asketh. Again, although it be said that faith works patience, yet it is prayer that fetcheth and brings down the power from God into the heart, that works both faith and patience, and all Prayer is the midwife by which faith, the mother, brings forth patience in the heart.

2. His gracious disposition in giving is further set out—

(1.) That he giveth liberally. The word ἀπλῶς both signifies a free-hearted giving, in a pure way of simplicity of heart; as being neither moved by any respect in us, as of worthiness, or the like, but singly and simply out of such motives and considerations as are in his own heart, and which his own great and gracious divine nature prompts him to: freely. We generally use to say, 'out of his free grace,' which comes all to one with the import of the word which the apostle useth here. Therefore make that grace as thy plea to him in thy prayers for it, or whatever else thou seekest at his hands.

(2.) It signifies largely, abundantly, liberally, richly; as the word is used in 2 Cor. 8:2, and so translated there. You have both in that passage of David's, 2 Sam. 7:21, 'According to thine own heart'—there is freely or simply—'hast thou done all these great things,'—there is liberally.

And upbraideth not.—That is a second property or disposition in God and his giving; the sense whereof is, first, that when he hath given liberally, never so often, nor so much, yet he upbraideth not, as men are wont to do. Among men, he that is most liberal, yet if the same man he hath formerly given unto will come often to him to be relieved, in the end he at least will excuse himself, or else say, Why do you come so often, thus again and again? which is a tacit and implicit way of upbraiding, or insinuation of foregone benefits. Surely Calvin, and Estius from him, have hit it, who put this scope and drift upon this clause: that no man should be afraid or solicitous to come, though never so often, to this free and generous giver, nor be discouraged within himself that he should need to come so often to him, nor forbear to continue his incessant importunities, though it be never so long a time ere he obtains.

And thus understood, it is as if he had said, God is so free, so simple-hearted and liberal in giving, as the oftener you come the welcomer, especially when for grace; yea, he hereby inviteth us of his own free heart to come always, to ask and pray continually and incessantly, as that parable, Luke 18:1, made on set purpose, shews. So then, a frequent, constant, importunate continuing in prayer to obtain is hereby exhorted unto.

A second scope in his adding this clause is, that though we find that God doth indeed upbraid impenitent men for their sins, as Christ those cities, yet he never did, or ever will do, any sinners in this case wherein it is proposed,—namely, when they shall come and humble themselves for their sins, seeking for more grace to help in time of need against their corruption; and this much rather than from deliverance from or out of troubles,—in this case he will not twit them with any of their unworthiness that hath been past; he will pass by their iniquity, and not upbraid them. And this is a great encouragement indeed; for the guilt of sin and former ingratitude do above all things deter men from coming to God, lest he should remember their iniquities and upbraid them with them.

And it shall be given him.—He follows and confirms this hope of obtaining with this sure and certain promise, 'and it shall be given him.' For when the souls of men, being made thoroughly apprehensive of their own want of a grace, are carried forth (to choose) to seek for grace, or such or such a gracious disposition; and that before and above all deliverance out of the trials they are in, as was before observed the Apostle had directed; in this case, God—that is, the God of all grace—is the most ready giver of grace that he is of anything else. There are no requests more pleasing to him, or that suit his divine and blessed disposition so as this doth of praying for grace, as thus stated. For the bestowing and giving of grace thus prayed for doth tend, above all things else, to the glorifying of himself; and it is the aiming thereat that must and doth carry out such a heart to make this to be the top and chief of its most earnest petitions. The God of grace is the most free of grace. Thus Christ says, 'if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit

to them that ask him?' Our Apostle hath also told us that though the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy, that yet God gives more grace—that is, a counterpoise of grace unto that lust—unto all them that humbly seek for it; as, chap. 4:5–7, 'Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.'

I shall now go forth of my text but to fetch in one thing. I observe, when the Apostle particularly comes to that part of his prayer made for the Colossians, that they might have all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness,—which exactly agrees with what is the matter exhorted unto in this text,—he implores the glorious power of God, in these words, Col. 1:11, 'That ye may be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' And to draw and fix your hearts on this glorious power of God, and point your prayers thereto, is the thing which I mean and intend.

And indeed the consideration of this one thing will have a general influence into all those three heads have been treated of in this last fourth section. As, first, it may be no great wonder if many of us have been so deficient and lacking in this grace; for it is not an ordinary power, such as in ordinary walkings holily doth assist us, but a glorious power is requisite to perfect this grace: which argues this to be so difficult an exercise above any other, and that our natures are infinitely remote from it of ourselves, which we not minding nor considering, have not perhaps with answerable vehemency implored the aid of so great a power. And, secondly, this gives us a clear reason why prayer, of all other means, should be directed by the Apostle, and extraordinarily set upon by us, as the most effectual, yea, as an only means to obtain this. For seeing that power lies out of ourselves, in God, which must effect this in us, then surely nothing can be judged so prevailing as faith and prayer, which are the graces in and by which the soul, going out of itself, in a sense of its utter insufficiency, supplicates the grace in God's heart to exert this power of his good pleasure, and so do draw it forth and bring it down into the heart. And then, thirdly, this gives us the highest encouragement, that we may obtain this perfect work of it, however remote from it the present temper of our spirits may seem to be to us, seeing that no less than such a

glorious power is requisite to effect it in the strongest Christians, and a power so glorious is able to work it in the weakest.

Let us pray, therefore, with all vehemency for ourselves, as the Apostle did for those Colossians, that this glorious power may come upon us, and strengthen our inward man—as it is elsewhere, Eph. 3:16—with all might; which might in us is the effect of that power in God as the cause.

For as this patience is to be an 'all patience,' or else it hath not its perfect work, so this might must be an 'all might' you must be strengthened with unto such a patience, or you will not be perfect at it. That might you had in such or such a trial will not serve to strengthen you against the next trial that shall come; but you must still have a new special might for every new trial. Your dependence, therefore, is great upon God for this perfect work of patience, and yet your encouragements are great. For as it must be that, if God will please to strengthen us under any great unusual tentations, that he should put forth no less than this 'glorious power:' so we have heard how, in our Apostle, he hath promised he will give it, and give it freely and liberally to them that make it their main, constant, earnest business to ask it; and therefore, his grace, if applied to, is engaged to put this power forth.

It cannot but be a great support to a weak heart that finds itself so remote and distant from such a work of patience, and weak also in comparison of finding such an inward might, that it should have ground and cause to think and to believe that God's glorious power is engaged most freely, to be abundantly and readily put forth, if continued to be sought unto. Why, this, says the weak heart, will do it; namely, this glorious power; and I have found by some trials already that the strong God and a weak heart will be too hard for any thing, yea, for the whole world.

And therefore, when you think your present trials that are come upon you far greater than you can bear, think withal of the glorious power of God that is at hand to help you. It is a great word that, 'his glorious power,'—a greater attribute could not have been named or found out for our comfort,—and is a word of virtue, force, and power, to hearten to or against anything whatever. It is true thy present trial may be, and is, above that inward strength which serves and hath served hitherto to act

thy graces in thy ordinary walkings with God, holily and sincerely. A child may by its ordinary strength be able to walk up and down a room by stools (suppose) supporting it, without any other extraordinary help; but if it be to go up a pair of stairs, the strength that enabled it to these lesser performances will not be sufficient thereunto; he must be carried and held up in the arms of one who is strong and mighty. And so it is here. That other part of our Christian obedience, the active life of a Christian, prayed for by the Apostle in that place to the Colossians also, whereby he walks fruitfully, &c., as in the seventh verse of that chapter, requires indeed God's power, for by it it is we are kept unto salvation all along. But when it comes to patience and long-suffering, and all patience, and that such a trial comes as will try all patience in you; then it is he makes mention of that glorious power, and not before. For it must be no less that must go to that than God's glorious power. And the promise therefore is, in such a case, that the Spirit of glory shall rest upon us, and not the Spirit of grace only, as 1 Peter 4:14. Relieve and comfort, therefore, yourselves with these things, and specially with this: that as your trials abound, so this glorious power of God will abound also towards you, for your support. Amen.

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