

February 12

Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:4

NOT a step of progress can be gained without the exercise of this grace of patience; and not one of the graces more beau-

tifully adorns the Christian character, or wins the approval of the world's conscience, or glorifies the God of all grace whose truth inspires it. It is long-suffering meekness earnestly striving to stem the tide of human imperfection and weakness, and endeavoring with painstaking care to regain the di-

vine likeness; it is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy; it is quick to perceive the paths of truth and righteousness, and prompt to walk in them; it is mindful of its own imperfections and sympathetic with the imperfections and shortcomings of others. Z. '93-295 R3090:2

PATIENCE CLOSELY ALLIED TO LOVE & MERCY

R5650 *"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—James 1:4...*

To be just under present conditions, one must be patient, not rash; for it would be (*) unjust to be impatient and severe with the unavoidable imperfections and weaknesses of our fellowmen. Therefore the spirit of a sound mind demands that we be patient in dealing with fallen humanity. God Himself possesses this quality of patience, and has long exercised it. In dealing with the world in the next Age the Church will need to have much patience, and under our present environments we need it constantly in order to develop the character necessary for a place on the Throne with our Lord.

Patience is closely allied to love and mercy... In man's present blemished, fallen condition, patience is sadly lacking, although it is often exercised outwardly for policy's sake. This Godlike quality, like all the other qualities of character inherent in God and in all perfect beings created in His likeness, has been largely obliterated in humanity by the fall of the first pair.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated *patience*. One of these words signifies forbearance, longsuffering. The other carries the thought of cheerful or hopeful endurance. The latter is the word used in our text, and has a much deeper significance than attaches ordinarily to our word patience. This constancy—the endurance of evil in a cheerful, willing manner—represents an element of character, and not merely a temporary restraint of feeling or of action. It signifies a development of heart and character which manifests itself in an endurance of wrong or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the requirement of Divine Wisdom and Love, which, while permitting present evils, has promised in due time to overthrow them."

R3150 "With the child of God this patience and kindness are not merely put on, as grapes might be tied to a thorn-bush, but, on the contrary, they are the *fruits* of the spirit—growths from or results of having come into fellowship with God, learned of him, received of his spirit of holiness, spirit of love."

F298 "To take notice of each other's imperfections, from the standpoint of criticism, would be to do ourselves much injury, cultivating in our hearts a faultfinding disposition, keenly awake to the weaknesses and imperfections of others, and proportionately, perhaps, inclined to be blind to our own defects."

R5650 "We are rather to be too patient, too sympathetic, than to have too little patience, too little sympathy. Remembering our own weaknesses, we are to exercise patience toward others who are seeking to overcome their imperfections, even as we are seeking to overcome our own. We all need that patience, forbearance..."

R3802 "Only those who possess the divine character of patience, forbearance, sympathy, compassion, mercy, love, could possibly be suited to the divine purpose in respect to the great work of blessing all the families of the earth.

R2587 "To insure that we do not consider this mercy to be merely an outward form, an expression of forgiveness and benevolence, our Lord expounds the matter, saying, "If ye do not from the heart forgive one another, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." It must be a genuine mercy, and not a feigned one; it must cover from sight, and so far as possible blot from memory, the failings and weaknesses of others, else it cannot hope for forgiveness and blotting out of its own shortcomings which its hunger and thirst for righteousness has clearly revealed to it. Only the merciful shall obtain mercy: and if we have not mercy at the hands of the Lord all is lost; for by nature we were children of wrath, even as others, and under just condemnation..."

"Mercy rejoiceth against justice," the Apostle explains. (Jas. 2:13.) Divine Mercy satisfied divine Justice, and thus prepared the way for the rescue of our race from the sentence of Justice: and so those who have become partakers of the divine spirit, and in whom it has reached a reasonable development, will permit their mercy to triumph over their conceptions of justice (for they have no law of justice over their fellows which needs to be satisfied).

While justice may not be blind in the Lord's people, while they may discern the faults of others most clearly, and while they may seek to let justice rule in respect to all of their own words, and thoughts, and actions, nevertheless they are to let mercy triumph in their hearts over justice as respects those who trespass against them, and they are not to hold resentments against those who have done them injury, nor to seek to avenge themselves and to inflict justice upon their opponents. Rather, they are to say, It is for God to be just; it is for me, who am a transgressor also against perfect justice, through the weaknesses which I have inherited, to have compassion upon my fellow-creature, who has inherited similar yet different weaknesses: it is for me to exercise accordingly the divine command, the blessed characteristic of mercy, compassion, forgiveness. And those who do so not only get rid of the evil works and sentiments of the world, the flesh and the devil, but increasingly become filled more and more with the spirit of love and gentleness and patient submission to the divine will, and thus the merciful are blessed even in the present time...

This condition of heart which sympathizes with others in their failures and imperfections helps to rid our hearts of certain of the works of the flesh and of the devil, which incline to cling to the Lord's people...

Anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife. All of these qualities of selfishness are antagonized by mercy, and by it largely they are driven from their secret hidings and entrenched positions in our hearts... How can we have malice toward those who are our enemies, if we love them and have mercy, compassion, upon them, and forgive them from our hearts? How can we have hatred toward them, if we have mercy upon them, and feel toward them only a forgiving spirit? And how can we be strifeful, if we have a merciful, a forgiving spirit ready to forgive trespasses against us, as we hope for forgiveness of our trespasses against the divine law?"

"LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK"

James 1:4

R4910 "Let patient endurance have her perfect work," or "perfect her work." Let patient endurance demonstrate, not only that you have the character, the qualifications of Love, demanded in the race for the prize, but also that you have love as an element of character, deep-rooted, immutable, so that you can endure opposition cheerfully."

R5650 "It will surely be profitable for us to cultivate carefully this element of Christian character of which our Lord speaks in such high commendation, and without which, His Word assures us, our character cannot be perfected. The Christian requires patient endurance to put on the whole armor of God, and having put it on, to keep it securely buckled. We need it in dealing not only with others, but also with ourselves, with our own blemishes. We should always take into account the various circumstances and conditions surrounding ourselves and others. As we look around, we see that the world is in a condition of blight, of sin. This knowledge should give us great sympathy with humanity, without which we would have but little patience. All of our brethren in Christ, like ourselves, are by nature members of this fallen human race. Therefore we should have a great deal of patient endurance with the Lord's people, as we would have them exercise this grace toward us."

R5650 "OUR LORD'S LESSONS ON PATIENT ENDURANCE

Recurring to the word patience as used in our text, let us glance backward to our Lord's Parable of the Sower, as recorded in Luke 8. In *verse 15* we read, "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience," patient endurance, constancy. The thought here is that to be of the fruit-bearing class which the Lord will approve and accept in

(*) The Original Tower correctly uses this word "unjust." In the year 1919, this word was changed to "injurious" in the Reprint.

His Kingdom we must do more than to receive the Word of His Testimony, even though we receive it with joy. It means more; for the stony ground class at first thus received it. For a brief time these seemed to give evidence of fruitfulness and vigor; but when the hot sun of persecution arose, they withered away, because of lack of depth of soil.

In this parable the Lord shows that patient endurance, constancy, is the final test of character. It follows after the receiving and the sprouting of the seed; it follows after love, hope, joy and faith have caused the seed to spring forth and begin to bear fruit. Patient endurance, then, is necessary in order that the fruit may be developed and thoroughly ripened, that the grain may be made ready for the garner. Ah, how important this grace is seen to be, in the light of God's Word! But remember that the endurance must be *cheerful*. We cannot suppose that He who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart would be pleased with His children, even when He saw them bearing much for His sake, if they endured it in an impatient or dissatisfied or unhappy frame of mind.

Those who thus endure surely would not be copies of God's dear Son, whose sentiment found expression in the words, "I *delight* to do Thy will, O My God!" All of the Royal Priesthood are sacrificers, as was our great Chief Priest; and God who accepts our sacrifices through the merit of our dear Redeemer, informs us that He loves a *cheerful* giver—one who performs his sacrifices gladly, with a willing heart. This does not mean that our bodies will never grow weary; but that our spirit will rejoice in the privilege of suffering weariness of the flesh in so noble and wonderful a service. But if our Father should see best to lay us aside from active work for a time, when our hearts are longing to serve, this too will be an opportunity to endure cheerfully His will for us. It may also be a test of our full submission of our wills to His, and thus be an important stepping-stone upward toward the Kingdom glories and privileges.

The other instance in which the Lord used this word patience, or patient endurance, is recorded in Luke 21:19. He had just been telling His followers that they must expect tribulations as the result of being His disciples during the present time, when sin abounds, when Satan is the prince of this world. They must expect opposition from various quarters; but He assured them that nevertheless they would be fully under Divine care and protection, even though persecutions would be permitted to reach and to affect them. Then follow the words, "In your patience [patient endurance, cheerful constancy] possess ye your souls."—Luke 21:19.

Our faith and our trust in the Lord and His gracious promises should be so strong and unwavering that they will far more than counterbalance the oppositions of the world, of false brethren, and of Satan's blinded servants. So implicit should be our faith in our Father's love and care that all these persecutions will be recognized and rejoiced in as the agencies of His providence in chiseling, shaping and polishing us as living stones for the glorious Temple which He is constructing, and which is now so soon, we believe, to be set up.

Viewing our trials from this standpoint, we can indeed rejoice and can possess our

souls, our lives, as New Creatures, even amidst tribulations, with cheerful endurance. Yea, we may realize that the soul, the real being, to whom God has given the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the future, cannot be injured by the persecutions of the flesh, or by anything that man can do unto us, so long as we are faithful to the Lord, accepting every experience that He permits to come to us as ministrations of His providence for our ultimate good and His glory.

THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE

Let us here examine carefully into the reason why it is necessary for us to develop this grace of patient endurance. It appears that the development of this quality is one of the conditions which God has attached to the call to joint-heirship with our Lord in the Kingdom, and one of the same conditions required of Him. The wisdom of this is manifest when we consider the work to which we are called—the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as God's Millennial Kingdom, in joint-heirship with the Only Begotten Son of God, our great Redeemer. That will be a mighty work; and it is eminently proper that Jehovah should require that those whom He shall account worthy of that exalted position shall not only appreciate His goodness and His glorious character, and prefer His service to sin and iniquity, but demonstrate their thorough loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to His will to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of these principles. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the individual to have an established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful, endurance even unto death would be necessary to demonstrate such a character.

We might illustrate this with the diamond. Suppose that we were able to make diamonds out of some plastic material with the brilliancy of the real diamond; and suppose that they became hard, but not so hard as the genuine diamond. Would these imitation diamonds have the value of the true diamond? By no means. If they were subjected to severe pressure, they would be crushed. And so with the Christian. If we supposed him possessed of every grace of character that could belong to the sons of God, save this one of firmness, endurance, he would not be fit to be amongst the Lord's jewels. Hence we see the necessity of the Lord's demand that patient, cheerful endurance shall be a characteristic of each one who shall be accepted to a place in His Royal Diadem.

The importance of this quality in the Christian character is again emphasized by the Apostle Paul. In His Epistle to Titus (2:2), when enumerating the characteristics of an advanced Christian, he declares that they must be "vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience." The final test of patient endurance must be passed before we can be accepted as of the Very Elect.

The same Apostle in writing to Timothy, thus reminds him, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patient endurance." We need this important grace more and more as we speed along on our race course and near the end of the way. Feet grow weary; trials and testings abound; therefore we need to "gird up the loins of

our mind" and, looking to our great Exemplar for the needed inspiration and strength, to set our faces like a flint for the home stretch.

TRIALS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

Our ability and strength to patiently endure should increase as we progress in the narrow way. We should grow "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." But we cannot possibly develop this essential trait of character without trials—experiences intended to call for the exercise of cheerful endurance. So let us not think it strange if we are called upon to pass through protracted trials which make necessary the nerving of ourselves to *bear*. But let us repeat that the virtue is not merely in the bearing; for the *world* has much to bear, but it is particularly in the *manner* in which we endure. At heart we must be sweet and submissive—in fullest harmony with the Lord's processes of development. This may be hard at times; but His grace will be sufficient, if we constantly apply for it. "Having done all," let us "stand!"

Ah, yes! We can see a new reason for the Lord's arrangement that we should have our trial as our Master had His—under an evil environment—that we might not only have all the necessary qualities of Christian character, but have them rooted, grounded, fixed, established.

The Apostle James likewise draws our attention to the importance of this quality. He says, "The trying of your faith worketh patience"; that is to say, if our faith stands the trial, it will work out in our character this patient endurance. On the other hand, if we do not attain this development, it will mean that our faith has not stood the test satisfactorily, and that we are not fit for the Kingdom... Not only must we go on and on, to the attainment of faith, fortitude, self-control, meekness and love, but having attained all these, we must *patiently endure*. We must "run with patience [cheerful endurance] the race set before us." Or, to use another figure of speech, it is merely starting in the School of Christ; merely having our names enrolled as pupils, to be taught of the Lord.

"THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION"

...The Church of Laodicea—the Church of our day—is not kept from entering into the "hour of temptation"; but we may be sure that we will be kept while *in* it, if we are faithful and true. Our dear Lord's special message to the Laodicean phase of the Church has been, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne."—Revelation 3:20,21.

Though we are not spared from this hour of temptation, we have a counterbalancing blessing as a result of living in the time of our Lord's Parousia... We may have His instruction, His dispensing to us of spiritual food, "meat in due season," in a manner and to a degree never before enjoyed by His saints. And, as we might expect, this greatest favor is offset by the subtle and severe trials and testings of this special "hour of temptation." If there was ever a time when patient endurance was needed by the Lord's faithful, it is *now*. If ever they needed the counsel, "In your *patience* possess ye your souls," they need it *now*. Those who are able to *patiently endure* will *stand* in this evil day. All others will fall. As the

Apostle forewarned us, the fiery ordeals of this day "will try every man's work, of what sort it is."

We find this quality of patient endurance lacking everywhere throughout Christendom today, even among the majority of the professed followers of Christ. It is becoming more and more scarce. Few wish to endure anything—for righteousness' sake, for Christ's sake, or for any one else's sake; and if endurance of anything unpleasant is absolutely necessary, the trial is borne with much of impatience, complaint and chafing. Moreover, a spirit of defiance and rebellion against everything like self-denial or resignation, a spirit of intense bitterness, is daily growing in the hearts of mankind.

This general tendency of the civilized world today toward non-endurance, impatience and rebellion against restraint necessarily has its influence upon those who are seeking to walk in the narrow way. Only by Divine grace can this tendency be successfully resisted, and progress be made toward the development of the likeness of Christ. This special grace, needed today by the Lord's children, will be withheld from those who are not walking close to the Lord, following in the footsteps of Jesus. It is because the professed followers of Christ are living so far from Him that we see today the tendencies are developing which we have noted amongst those who profess His name. This spirit so prevalent is at the bottom of mob violence which is kept down largely by military force, in the outbreaks against law and order which we hear of so frequently.

We may expect this spirit to continue to grow. There is a feeling amongst the masses that in the past they have been too patient, not sufficiently aggressive—the feeling that if they had taken things into their own hands long ago present conditions might have been averted. But those who have kept the Lord's Word of patient endurance, who have sought from Him the wisdom from on High, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and of good fruits," have learned that He has a due time in which His purposes shall be accomplished, and they are willing to abide His time patiently, knowing that it is best. They have learned that

"God's plans, like lilies white, unfold;
We must not tear the close-shut leaves
apart, Time will reveal the
hidden heart of gold."...

ST. PAUL'S PICTURE OF PRESENT CONDITIONS

The hour of trial is not coming alike upon all, for all of Christendom are not upon the same plane—mentally, morally or physically. The trial as it is coming upon Christendom in general, however, is pictured by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He here enumerates certain characteristics of this "hour of temptation." He says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves—covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers [enticers to strife], incontinent [not under restraint, impetuous], fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors [those who cannot be trusted, would sell out their best friends for selfish considerations], heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

This is a graphic picture of present-day conditions in the Christian world, so-called. Because they received not the Truth in the love of it, therefore God has sent them "strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," and should be condemned thereby. This hour of temptation has not yet reached its greatest intensity, but we believe this stage will be reached in a very short time. Blessed are all they who have made the Lord, "even the most High, their Habitation." These shall not be moved; yet many of them will pass through most severe trials and temptations. Through the mails we learn of the struggles and prayers of many of God's children—some because of their own imperfections and frailties, and some because of the imperfections of others; and still others are tried because of earthly cares and burdens which they seem unable to fully overcome or to cast upon the Lord.

LET US HAVE THE PROPER FEAR

We sympathize with these dear ones, and counsel them as best we can, remembering the Master's words, "Blessed are ye

that weep now; for ye shall laugh." (Luke 6:21.) Our heart is especially solicitous for those whose letters give evidence that they are in temptation, but realize it not—who are being swallowed up of ambition or business or other "cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches"—whose love for the Truth seems to be growing cooler instead of hotter, and who seem to *feel* less and *see* less than they did years ago. These seem to be sleeping when they should be watching and praying; and this hour of trial, we fear, is finding them unprepared; while some who are weeping, praying and striving are more like our dear Master in Gethsemane; and like Him, they will be strengthened for the final trial.

Let us each, dear brethren, be very solicitous for ourselves and for each other, and counting the prize held out to us as far dearer and more precious than all else beside, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left to us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Let us so love all the Lord's dear children that their welfare will be our chief concern; and this will mean our own spiritual health. Yet we must not allow our love even for the brethren to hinder our fullest confidence in the Lord's love and wisdom in the choice of His Bride, even though siftings should take from us some whose fellowship we have cherished.

Let us patiently hold on our way—this blessed way! Let us do with our might what our hands find to do. Soon will come the Harvest Home! Soon, if faithful, we shall gather, as a glorious company, to go out no more forever... But let us remember that "we have need of *patience*, that after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise!"—Hebrews 10:36.

"How light our trials then will seem!
How short our pilgrim way!
The life of earth a fitful dream,
Dispelled by dawning Day!

* * * *

"Then peace, my heart! and hush,
my tongue!
Be calm, my troubled breast;
Each passing hour prepares thee more
For everlasting rest!"

R3089 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0) THOUGH YE BE ESTABLISHED

"I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth."--2 Peter 1:12.

WHAT things are here referred to? Assuredly the necessity of giving all diligence to add to our faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance [self-control]; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity [love]:... For if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.--*Verses 5-11.*

To be established in the truth signifies that we have carefully studied and thoroughly proved it by "the law and the testimony" (Isa. 8:20), and that as a consequence we are convinced of its verity, so that our faith is steadfast and immovable: we know whom we have believed; we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; we have partaken of the sweets of fellowship with him; we have partaken of his spirit of meekness, faith and godliness to such an extent as to be led into a joyful realization of the fulness of his grace as manifested in the wonderful divine plan of the ages; and we have been permitted to see, not only the various features of that plan, but also the necessity and reasonableness of all its various measures in order to the full accomplishment of its glorious outcome in the fulness of the appointed times. This is what it is to be "established in the present truth." It is indeed a most blessed condition, bringing with it

such peace and joy as the world can neither give nor take away.

But though we be thus established in the present truth, we need to bear in mind that our election to the high position to which we are called is not yet *made sure*. The race for the prize of our high calling is still before us, and we are yet in the enemy's country, surrounded by many subtle and powerful foes, so that if we would be successful we must "fight the good fight of faith," remembering, too, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [God's Truth is] mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds" of error and superstition and of inbred sin; and remembering, also, that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."-- 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12.

It is in view of these facts--of the warfare before us, of the subtlety of our temptations and of the weakness of the flesh--that the faithful Apostle Peter urges all diligence in the cultivation of the Christian graces and a continual calling to remembrance of the precious truths we have learned, that we may be strengthened thereby to make our calling and election sure. Faith is a good thing; but faith without virtuous works is dead; and to hold the truth in unrighteousness is worse than never to have received it. The truth is given to us for its sanctifying effect upon our hearts and lives. Therefore let it

have free course and be glorified. Let its precious fruits appear more and more from day to day. Add to your faith virtue--true excellence of character, such excellence of character as will mark you as separate from the world and its spirit. In all such the world will see those moral qualities which they must approve, however they may oppose our faith. Add sterling honesty, truth and fair dealing in all business relations; moral integrity, in all social relations; manifestly clean hands and a pure heart, and a bridled tongue that works no ill to a neighbor. All of these the world has a right to expect from those who call themselves Christians; and all of these are indispensable features of that virtuous character which must be added to our faith. The clean hands will not dabble in anything that is not virtuous: they will have nothing to do with unrighteous schemes or projects in business. The pure heart will not devise evil things, or harbor evil thoughts, or plot mischief. And the bridled tongue will not be given to evil speaking, but will hold its peace when it cannot speak well and wisely. But the promptings of virtue go further than merely these negative features which refuse to do anything which would work ill to a neighbor; they incite not only to passive, but also to active, goodness--in benevolent charity which seeks to alleviate suffering, to sympathize with sorrow, to comfort those in distress and to elevate and bless others --to assist "all men as we have opportunity."

To such a virtuous character we are counseled to add knowledge--the knowledge of God's character, that we may the more thoroughly imitate it, and of his truth, that we may more fully conform to its teachings: and to knowledge, temperance -- moderation, self-restraint, in all things. "Let your moderation be known unto all men." We are not to be hasty and hot-tempered, or rash and thoughtless. But we should strive to be evenly balanced, thoughtful and considerate: our whole manner should be characterized by that carefulness which would indicate that we are ever mindful of the Lord's pleasure, of our responsibility to him as his representatives, and of our influence upon our fellow-men, to see that it always is for good, never for evil.

"And to temperance, patience." "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Yes, this grace smooths the way for every other, because all must be acquired under the process of patient and continuous self-discipline. ⁽¹⁾Not a step of progress can be gained without the exercise of this grace of patience; and not one of the graces more beautifully adorns the Christian character, or wins the approval of the world's conscience, or glorifies the God of all grace whose truth inspires it. It is long-suffering meekness earnestly striving to stem the tide of human imperfection and weakness, and endeavoring with pains-taking care to regain the divine likeness. It is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy; it is quick to perceive the paths of truth and righteousness, and prompt to walk in them: it is mindful of its own imperfections and sympathetic with the imperfections and shortcomings of others.

"And to patience, godliness"--a careful study and imitation of the divine character as presented in the divine Word.

"And to godliness, brotherly kindness"--an exercise and manifestation of the principles of the divine character toward our fellow-men.

"And to brotherly kindness, charity"--love. Kindness may be manifested where but little love exists toward the subject of such kindness; but we cannot long persevere in such acts of kindness before a sympathetic interest is awakened; and by and by that interest, continually exercised, deepens into love. And even though the subject may be unlovely in character, the love of sympathy for the fallen and degraded grows, until it becomes tender and solicitous and akin to that of a parent for an erring son.

Peter indeed describes a most amiable character, but who can consider it without feeling that to attain it will be a life-work. It cannot be accomplished in a day, nor a year, but the whole life must be devoted to it; and day by day, if we are faithful, we should realize a measure of growth in grace and of development of Christian character. It is not proper that we know the truth, and are contented to hold it in unrighteousness. We must see to it that the truth is having its legitimate and designed effect upon the character. And if the truth is thus received into good and *honest* hearts, we have the assurance of the Apostle that we shall never fall, and that in due time we shall be received into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Hence we see the necessity of ever keeping the instructions and precepts of the Lord fresh in our minds, and of drinking deep into its inspiring spirit, although we are already established in the faith. To be established in the faith is one thing, but to be established in Christian character and in all the graces of the spirit is quite another.

A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION

Feeling as we do the necessity of a deeper work of grace, both in our own hearts and in the hearts of all of the dear household of faith, the thought has occurred to us that more special effort in this particular direction on the part of us all would probably be of great benefit. We do not know through what discipline of faith and patience we may yet be called to pass in the approaching dark night of which we are forewarned, but "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and also, thank God, sufficient unto the day is the grace thereof, if we earnestly lay hold of it and patiently continue in it. As each day brings its trials, so, if we have been rightly exercised by the trials, each day should bring its victories--thus leaving us strengthened and more firmly established in character, as well as in faith.

With the end in view of specially promoting the growth of Christian character, our suggestion, which has already been made and adopted by the congregation in Allegheny and many other places, is that wherever a few of the consecrated can arrange to meet together, it would be well to appoint a midweek meeting for this special purpose. Such a meeting should be devoted to worship, prayer and praise, and to brotherly exhortation, conference and counsel, but not to Bible study or controversy. All discussions of doctrinal matters should be eliminated from such a meeting, and such subjects as would elicit controversy avoided, leaving such matters for another meeting, at an appropriate hour on the Lord's day, when all meet together; the object being, not to ignore doctrine, nor to discourage Bible-study; but, while meeting this necessity at the one meeting (on the Lord's day), to devote the other (the mid-week meeting) to the other equal necessity, without distraction.

Our arrangement here in Allegheny and Pittsburgh is as follows: As our congregation is much scattered, we have them parceled into as many neighborhood gatherings as is necessary for the accommodation of all desiring to attend; and a leader is appointed for each meeting, discretion being observed as to capability. They should be brethren established in the faith--sound in doctrine, faithful and pious. These meetings are held on Wednesday evenings at the residence of some member of each little group. The meeting is opened with a hymn and prayer, the reading, by the leader, of Sunday afternoon's text; then each one is asked to give his or her personal experience as to progress in the narrow way--as to how he or she is growing in grace and striving to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. Here they may humbly tell of their victories, or speak of their trials, or ask for Christian counsel and sympathy in hard places, speaking more freely in such little gatherings than would be possible or proper in larger assemblies. Here they can hear each other's petitions for each other, and Christian love and sympathy flow the more freely from heart to heart.

The object kept in mind at these meetings is a fresh, living, weekly and daily experience with the Lord and in his service, and not merely a stale experience of the remote past. A clear past experience is good, but a clear present experience is better;-- much more vitally important. Doctrine is ignored at these meetings except as the word doctrine applies to all Scripture teachings, including hope, trust, obedience, godliness, prayer, etc. Too many, we find, have been contenting themselves with *knowing* the truth, without making special efforts to live it, daily and hourly. As honesty of heart and faith in the Redeemer's finished work and consecration to his service are necessary to a full entrance into the "holy," where the deeper features of the divine plan can be discerned and fully appreciated, so these qualities must remain, must abide, or the light will become darkness--you will be cast out of the light into the outer darkness in which the world and the nominal church grope after the phosphorescent glimmerings of error--Spiritism, Christian Science, Theosophy and Universalism.

The leader of such a meeting should study to adapt his counsel, correction or encouragement to the special needs of each of the little group over which he is placed, and his reverent piety and personal interest in each should inspire the confidence of all. We believe that such mid-week meetings prove steppingstones to higher attainments in the divine life, and that thus all may be greatly blessed and profited; and the whole body will be able the more effectually to minister to one another in spiritual things. On the middle Wednesday evening of each month the prayer feature is given more attention and an opportunity granted for all to address the throne of grace two or three in immediate succession. At a quarterly Sunday evening general meeting of the same character, we hear of the spiritual progress of the various little groups both from the leaders and the various attendants, and quarterly the leaders are transferred to other groups.

May the blessing of the Lord go with the suggestion, and may the outcome be a strengthening of the bond of Christian love and mutual sympathy and fellowship everywhere.

⁽¹⁾ Feb. 12 Manna, Jam. 1:4