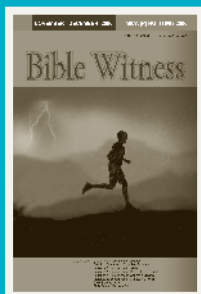


Bible Witness



Articles Inside:

- God of Patience and Consolation
- Ten Significances of Christian Patience
- Patience & Endurance in Trials
- Patience & Endurance in Marital Relationship
- Patience & Endurance in Christian Ministry
- Patience & Endurance in Christian Growth
- Give Glory to God
- Bible Trivia - Genesis 24



Editor
Prabhudas Koshy

Publishing & Circulation
Co-ordinator
Lok Kwok Wah

Technical Editors
Adrienne Foo, Carolyn Koshy, Jenny Lok
Lok Kwok Wah, Mah Lean Choo

Cover Design
Melissa Neo

Layout
Kenneth Wong

Illustrations
Sharon Ng

Publisher
Bible Witness Media Ministry of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church,
Singapore

Printer
Chung Printing

Contact Information

By mail:
Bible Witness Media Ministry
510 Geylang Road, #02-06
Singapore 389466

Tel: (65) 6741-1910 **Fax:** (65) 6741-1016

Web-site: www.biblewitness.com

E-mail: editor@biblewitness.com

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GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION

Prabhudas Koshy

From the innermost recess of his affection, that great missionary of the Gospel, the Apostle Paul, meditatively wrote about God, that He is “the God of patience and consolation” (Romans 15:5). At that juncture of Paul’s life and ministry, the most befitting description he could write about God, whom he came to know so intimately, was “the God of patience and consolation”.

That title depicts God as both the origin and source of those spiritual virtues. He not only demonstrates enormous patience with sinful men, but also endows His people with the grace of patience that they may press forward through their temptations and trials unto victory.

Patience is one of God’s perfections. In a Christian, patience is a grace wrought by the work of the Holy Spirit; and it is cultivated and perfected through suffering and sorrow. But in God, patience is an essential attribute of His being, a part of His nature, so perfect that He needs no nurturing of it through some disciplinary process. God is never without patience. He is infinitely patient.

In Exodus 34:6, the LORD Himself proclaimed, “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Numbers 14:18 says, “The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.” In Nehemiah 9:17, we read, “Thou art a God ready to

Patience

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “patience” (*arak*) is translated as “longsuffering”. When the same word appears together with the word “anger” (*aph*), it is translated as “slow to anger”. In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated as “patience”. The first Greek word, *makrothumeo*, has been translated as “be patient”, “have patience”, “have long patience”, “bear long”, “suffer long”, “be longsuffering” and “patiently endure”. The second Greek word, *hupomone*, is translated as “patience”, “enduring”, “patient continuance” and “patient waiting”. The general idea behind the use of all these words is forbearance or patient endurance in the midst of provocations and problems.

pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not” (cf. Psalms 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3).

How can we define God’s patience? It can be defined as God’s restraint of His wrath and power against man’s sins. In other words, it is descriptive of His forbearance of the wicked. As the prophet Nahum wrote, “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power” (Nahum 1:3). Patience denotes the moderation of His provoked justice; His forbearance which restrains Him from avenging immediately the injuries He meets with daily in such a rebellious world.

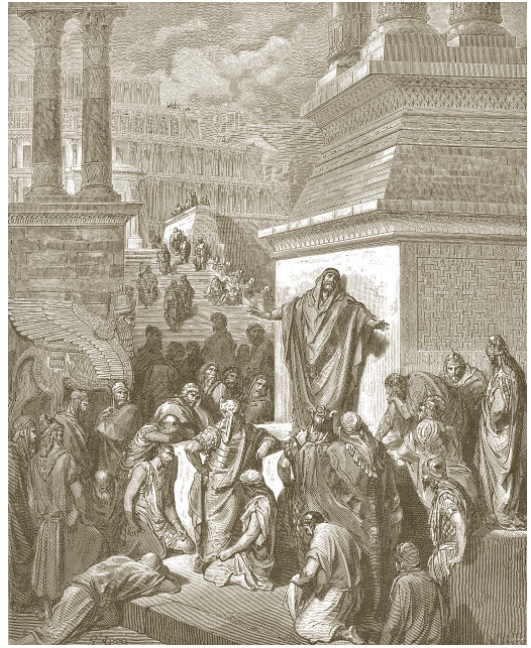
While explaining the patience of God, Stephen Charnock, the “prince of puritan,” wrote, “Men that are great in the world are quick in passion, and are not so ready to forgive an injury, or bear with an offender, as one of a meaner rank. It is a want of power over that man’s self that makes him do unbecoming things upon a provocation. A prince that can bridle his passions is a king over himself as well as over his subjects. God is slow to anger because He is great in power. He has no less power over Himself than over His creatures.” Puritan writers like Charnock have explained the patience of God as His power over His own passions when dealing with man.

When a person does not have the power to resent an offence or to punish defiance, though he would very much desire to do so, his forbearance is not patience, but, simply weakness. That person is merely bound by his frailty. But it is not the case with God’s patience. God is all powerful; and He is always capable of bringing His righteous wrath upon transgressors at any time at His will. He could damn all His enemies in one breath. Yet, He arrests His wrath from instantly destroying men; and that is because He is patient. So, patience is not a weakness in God, but His perfect and powerful virtue. Octavius Winslow, a preacher-friend of Charles Spurgeon, wrote, “The power of God is more manifest in His patience to a multitude of sinners than it could be in creating millions of worlds out of nothing; this is a power over Himself.”

God’s Patience towards a Provocative Human Race

If we think about the immensity of mankind’s innumerable and despicable sins that provoke God every single moment, we would then have a glimpse of the limitless nature of God’s patience. Man’s provocation of God is great, universal and constant. Every second, billions

Jonah preaching to the Ninevites
- Gustav Dore



of people cast themselves into every kind of wicked imaginations, having no reverence for the holy and just God. The more we realize the enormity of humanity’s rebellion, the more we wonder at the immeasurably vast patience of God that restrains His just vengeance against their sins. If not for His patience, the earth would be filled with ruined cities and slain bodies of rebellious people. Psalm 78:38 reminds us, “But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.”

Man should be careful not to think of God’s patience that restrains the quick execution of the divine wrath against all his sins as God’s condoning of sins. God hates all sins though He is long-suffering with the sinner. Sooner or later, God’s wrath would fall upon the sinner. So let the sinner repent while His patience provides him a second chance by the restraining of His holy wrath against his sins.

God's early warnings of the coming judgement against their sins are also a manifestation of His patience. Instead of immediately punishing sinners, God is seen sending a warning to them. The warning has gone forth, but the execution lingers. In this regard, God's dealing with the city of Nineveh is a good example of His patience. God said about Nineveh that "their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:2b). So God sent Jonah to that city and told them, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4b). Instead of sending instant punishment for their sins, God set a forty-day period before He would execute His threat. This was certainly a sign of God's patience and mercy towards that city. This expression of His patience through threatening or warning of judgement after a period of time, provided Nineveh with an opportunity to repent from its sins. Impenitent sinner! God is giving you space, or time, to repent; and He expects you to repent lest you perish.

So often, God's patience also made His punishment of sinners lighter than His threats against them. The stroke is made lighter than the crime by His patience. If God were to empty the vials of His displeasure upon sinful man, who can bear? His patience towards us has made His punishment less severe than our provocations. The sword of His vengeance is dipped in heaven's tender mercies and patience, so that we may not be quickly consumed by His wrath. Oh! what a patient God is our God, His patience is shown even to His enemies!

It is even more wondrous that His patience is still awaiting the repentance of many more awful sinners. Except for the infinite restraint God puts upon Himself, this fallen world could not exist a moment. Thus the patience of God works for the salvation of man.

"... God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:22-23).

Peter spoke of God's amazing patience towards the transgressors of Noah's time – "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:20). It is also the case today. Like Noah and his family who in their days exemplified the Lord's enormous patience, we should also quickly turn away from our sins to the Lord for redemption and sanctification. We will do well if we remember Peter's words that "the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:15).

Even though He is aware of the innumerable provocations of men, He has been patient with them. Today, God bears with much patience a wicked world. Knowledge of rebellion and provocations normally makes it hard for any man to show patience. God knows about all of man's heinous acts; and yet He restrains His wrath towards them. Oh what patience and mercy He has been showing to sinful men! So, sinner, rejoice in His patience and quickly turn from your sin to Christ for forgiveness. Delay no longer!

God's Patience towards His People

If God shows such long-suffering with people who are "fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22), He will all the more show patience to those that are prepared for glory, who have already repented and believed.

God's patience towards His people is greater than His patience towards the unregenerate.

When a Christian sins, he sins against the grace, pardon, and love that God has already extended to him in Christ. Oh consider the enormity of God's patience towards our stubborn unbelief and base murmurings, our secret rebellion and countless backslidings, our self-pleasing ways and unwillingness to do His will. How true it is that His patience towards the saint is greater than His patience towards the sinner!

The knowledge of God's patience is a great comfort to the believer; and hence He is called "the God of patience and consolation" (Romans 15:5). His patience speaks of His tender feelings towards His people. God's

attribute of patience shows us that there is no place in the heart of God for obduracy but much stoicism. Patience implies feelings. God is infinitely sensitive. He does not deal with His people without deep feelings for them.

Dear Christian, are you saddened that you have grieved the Lord by your sins? Truly, our sins are offensive to Him. Nonetheless, let us remember that the patience He has manifested is indicative of His graciousness and readiness to restore us. Let the knowledge of His patience bring comfort to us that we may yield ourselves to walk with Him worthily.



CONTRIBUTORS OF ARTICLES

Rev. Dr. Prabhudas Koshy
(Editor)
Pastor of Gethsemane B-P Church



Rev. Errol D. Stone
Pastor of Faith Presbyterian
Church-Perth



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Khoo
Academic Dean of
Far Eastern Bible College

Rev. Tan Kian Sing
Pastor of Berean B-P Church



Elder Boaz Boon
Elder of Calvary Tengah B-P Church

TEN SIGNIFICANCES OF CHRISTIAN PATIENCE

Prabhudas Koshy

Patience (or longsuffering) is a rare find, though a very pleasant and advantageous virtue. It is a very necessary Christian virtue in living our lives for the glory of God.

The New Testament is abundantly clear concerning the significance of “patience” (endurance or longsuffering) in Christian life. The two Greek words (*hupomone*, *makrothume*) that are translated as patience (endurance or longsuffering) appear 75 times in the New Testament as nouns and verbs. Such a large number of occurrences of this Christian virtue in the New Testament underscore its importance.

Below are ten different significant areas of Christian life where patience is an absolute necessity.

1. To be affirmed of our salvation

Our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:22 that “ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (cf. Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13). They that endure struggles and trials of life to the end, shall then receive the end of their faith and hope, even the salvation of their souls. Paul tells us in Romans 2:7, “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” No other conduct gives evidence of one’s salvation and true piety but that which endures in the ways of righteousness. Only those who persevere in a life of holiness can prove their faith and salvation, and be affirmed of their inheritance of eternal life. Patient endurance is a sure mark of the saved.

2. To run and finish the Christian race triumphantly

Hebrews 12:1 instructs us, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Believers ought to run with patience the race marked out in their Christian lives, setting aside whatever that hinders and the sins that so easily entangle.

Though at the outset of the above exhortation we are told to look at the cloud of witnesses who endured and finished their race on earth, such as the Old Testament heroes of faith mentioned in the earlier chapter, we are also encouraged to look at the paragon of patience, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the next two verses. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:2-3). Our Lord endured far more than any of the heroes of faith named in Hebrews 11, and therefore He is the perfect example for us to follow. He endured the cross! This involved shame, suffering, the “contradiction (opposition)” of sinners, and even the “forsaking” by the Father. Yet He endured and finished the work the Father gave Him to do.

Christ is both the exemplar and the enabler in our Christian race! Since Christ is the “author

and finisher of our faith”, trusting Him releases His power in our lives. As we see Him in the Word and yield to His Spirit, He increases our faith and enables us to run the race. Following Christ’s example of patience in running the race would help us to look ahead towards the mark and finish the race with patience.

3. To be maturing Christians

We read in James 1:4, “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” Many ordeals in our Christian life will induce patience in us – “the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3b). Then patience should be permitted to be fully developed. Christians should not hinder patience from working its appropriate effects. As Barnes commented, “Let it not be obstructed in its fair influence on the soul, by murmurings, complaining, or rebellion. Patience under trials is fitted to produce important effects on the soul, and we are not to hinder them in any manner by a perverse spirit, or by opposition to the will of God. Every one who is afflicted should desire that the fair effects of affliction should be produced on his mind, or that there should be produced in his soul precisely the results which his trials are adapted to accomplish.”

We might have accepted sound principles of God’s Word, but those principles need to be fully exercised to bring about our maturity. Patience in afflictions, perhaps, more than anything else, will do this. Therefore, we should let patience develop within us the maturity that God expects of us.

4. To be fruit-bearing Christians

Jesus said in Luke 8:15, “But 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.” When we hear God’s Word, we must persevere

rigorously to apply its truth in our lives. Obeying God’s Word will require changes to our beliefs, ambitions, habits, practices, etc. This will cause much disturbance to our pursuits, relationships, and many other aspects of life that have been the norms of life. Without patient endurance it is impossible to overcome all the adversities and stress that will be upon us that we may bear fruits in obedience to God’s Word. There must be patience to both suffer and endure the troubles that may arise. Patience is an absolute necessity to be an obedient and fruit-bearing Christian. The best fruits require time, cultivation, patience. There is no other way for real fruit to be borne.

5. To secure the well-being of our souls

Jesus said in Luke 21:19, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” Jesus said those words after mentioning the betrayals and persecutions that a believer would face in this hostile world. So Jesus was emphasising that it is our duty at all times, especially in perilous trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls, lest our love for this world causes us to reject our faith and be lost for ever. Neither grief nor fear should be allowed to terrorise or to cause the loss and enjoyment of our souls. In times of suffering patience will guard our souls. Patience will keep our souls composed and in a good frame when threats and violence ruffle us.

6. To be joyous Christians

James 5:11 says, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” We fight battles to have victories, likewise we endure our trials to be joyous or blessed by the Lord. There can be no peaks without valleys, and likewise endure

depressing moments to enjoy the exultation that comes from God. If you want the blessing, you must be prepared to carry the burden, fight the battle, and walk the valley of the shadow of death. We ourselves must count it a joyous thing to endure, and not count ourselves miserable if we endure. The Apostle Paul prayed for the believers that they will be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:11); and may this be our prayer too.

7. To inherit the promises of God

We have the promises from God. But how can we inherit them? Hebrews 6:12 exhorts us, “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Promises of God are not for those who are sluggish or lazy. We should exercise faith and patience to inherit those promises for ourselves! If we would diligently hold onto the course of faith that we are pursuing, we can inherit all the promises of God. Doubters and deserters will never be able to realise the promised blessings of God. Like Caleb and Joshua, we must believe God’s promise and want to go in and claim the land!

Hebrews 10:36 reminds us, “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” When difficulties arise, impatience will lead us to impudence and disobedience that would in turn cause us to forsake God’s promises. But patience will help us to be obedient to the will of God that we might taste all of the benefits He has promised. It is written of Abraham that “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (Hebrews 6:15).

8. To be hopeful Christians

The Apostle Paul exhorts in Romans 8:25, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do

we with patience wait for it.” Christians have a blessed hope; and they journey through their many afflictions with patience because of the great glory that awaits them at the coming of Christ. They reach out to their hope in patience, enduring the severest trials by bearing the most intense pain without a murmur. The believer does not get frustrated as he sees and experiences suffering and pain in this world. He knows that the temporary suffering will one day give way to eternal glory. The best is yet to come! Matthew Henry wrote, “In hoping for this glory, we have need of patience, to bear the sufferings we meet with, in the way to it and the delays of it. Our way is rough and long; but He that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and therefore, though He seems to tarry, it becomes us to wait for Him.” Romans 5:3-4 reminds us “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

James 5:7-8 also instructs us to patiently press forward to His coming. “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. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” James did not tell these suffering believers to put on white robes, climb a hill, and wait for Jesus to return. “Keep working and waiting” was his admonition. “Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Luke 12:43).

9. To be efficient in our ministries

Serving the Lord in various ministries needs much patience. “But in all things” says the Apostle Paul, “approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in

afflictions, in necessities, in distresses" (2 Corinthians 6:4). Paul and his co-labourers exercised much forbearance so that many challenges and tribulations in the ministry might be endured without affecting the effectiveness of their ministry. Paul then listed a few of the trials he endured because of the opposition of people: stripes, imprisonments, and tumults (riots). These he experienced because he was faithfully serving the Lord. He then named some of the sacrifices he made voluntarily for the sake of the ministry: stripes (beatings), labours (work resulting in weariness), watchings (sleepless nights), fastings (willingly going without food). With God's help, he had great endurance through all those adverse and difficult circumstances.


The Gospel ministry of the Apostles was not only characterised by signs and wonders, but also by afflictions and patience. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:12). While exhorting Timothy, a young minister of the Word, Paul reminded him of the patience and endurance that he, being an the apostle, has manifested so that Timothy may do likewise. He wrote, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Timothy 3:10-11). James also reminds us, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10). So Paul's exhortation to everyone who serves the Lord is, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Timothy 6:11).

10. To be a praiseworthy church

Paul wrote twice to the church in Thessalonica; and in each of those letters, he had not only commended the church, but also given thanks to God for their spiritual excellence. Patience was one of their spiritual traits for which Paul gave thanks to God.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, he wrote, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." Likewise, he wrote in 2 Thessalonians 1:4, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."

Every faithful church will encounter harsh, hostile responses from this world. Such a church should not be ashamed of the hostility they have to endure. In God's sight, their patient endurance is honourable and worthy of His commendation. A church that is patient in her struggles is a great encouragement to other Christians, and will bring praise out of their mouths to the glory of God.

In Revelation 2, the Lord Jesus commended twice the church in Ephesus for their patience in their witnessing. He said to them, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience" (v. 2a). Again He said, "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" (v. 3). Likewise, the church in Thyatira was also commended by the Lord for their patience in their service – "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works" (Revelation 2:19a). It is not the physical glamour and prosperity of the church that Christ honours, but its patience in the midst of challenges, problems and opposition. 

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE IN TRIALS

Errol D. Stone

In the book of Acts 4 and 5, the Jewish priests unleashed persecution against the Apostles and Christian leaders.

It became more severe when Saul (who became the Apostle Paul) went about persecuting the lay-people. This resulted in the scattering of the early Christians, especially after the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7. Luke tells us in Acts about the events which occurred

after Stephen was killed with Saul's consent, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. 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 Judaea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).

Through persecution, God scattered the Jerusalem Church across the Empire as His witnesses. The early Jewish Christians were literally bruised with adversity. Their persecution, trials and sufferings never left them. The Roman emperor, Claudius, and Roman pagans also hunted down the early Christians all over the Roman Empire.

In this earthly life, there is no total escape from pain and suffering. Although trials are not always appreciated, trials are expected (James 1:2), trials are to test our faith (v. 3) and trials require wisdom (v. 5) and there is a blessing for overcoming trials (v. 12). It is always difficult

"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).

to rejoice in trials from a human perspective. James not only encourages us to endure them,

but also gives the imperative to do so. The Christians to whom James wrote his epistle were scattered and battle-wearied. So he urged them strongly to maintain a patient and steadfast practice of faith, in a manner that would bring honour and glory

to a holy and righteous God.

Why must we patiently bear our trials?

It will develop spiritual joy and sublime virtues within us:

Tests reveal the nature of the person being tested. So trials are sent into our lives to fully develop and prove our spiritual character. The Bible makes it plain that God tests believers to bring out the best; Satan tempts them to bring out the worst.

As Christians grow spiritually through their many trials, they understand that God turns trials into triumphs. Towards the end of their trials, they would be thoroughly convinced that the heavenly Father permitted those trials in order to bring forth spiritual maturity; which would fill them with great joy. The Lord does all things well for His people's edification.

He does not allow anything to touch His people that does not fulfil His eternal purpose in their lives.

James does not say that the trial is all joy, but to count it all joy. To experience joy in the midst of trials, we need to bring eternity into the picture and see our trials from God's viewpoint of His eternal purposes, which is for our highest good (Romans 8:28). Such correct understanding of our trials will bring joy and rejoicing. "Count it all joy" has the sense of full, supreme, unreserved rejoicing of the highest quality. Such a joy was seen in the suffering Messiah, which we ought to emulate - "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus Christ knew that as He endured the cruel crucifixion and rejection by the people, an eternal throne was awaiting. We also must fix our eyes upon our eternal joy and rewards as we go through trials.

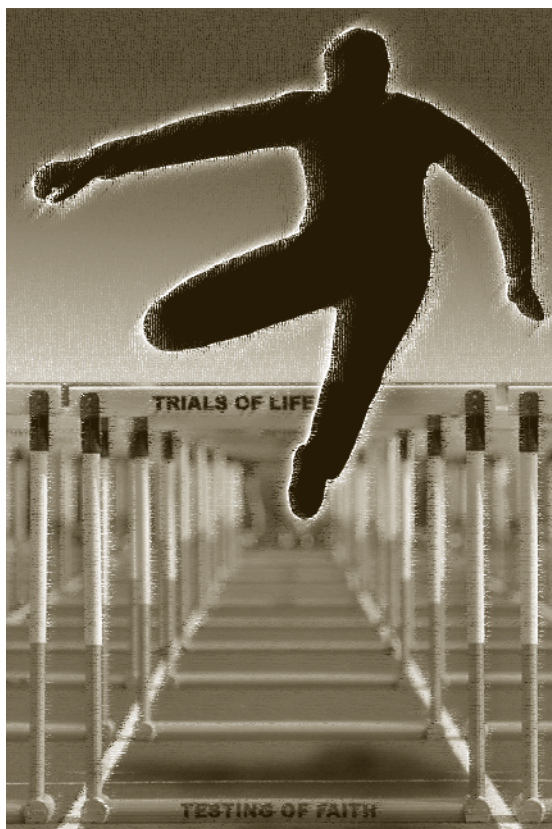
It will prove the purity and value of our faith in Christ:

The various trials which test our faith, produce steadfast endurance. These testings will come in all kinds of trials, including sicknesses, persecution, isolation, disappointments in personal relationships, failures in work related issues, problems in the family and Church, financial difficulties, poverty, etc. In such times, our faith in God will teach us to be steadfast and endure all the difficulties. Such a patient endurance of faith will produce spiritual maturity. In fact, there is no other way to produce high degrees of maturity in our lives.

The word "trying" (testing) in James 1:3 is the word for sterling coinage that was proven

genuine and unalloyed. It was pure gold and pure silver that had been tried and tested to be true. The trials we endure have a way of separating "lip service" from the real thing.

An article from Paul Lee Tan's Encyclopaedia of 15,000 Illustrations, "Beaten Into Higher Value", is worth mentioning here. "A bar of steel is worth five dollars. When it is wrought into horseshoes, it is worth ten dollars. If made into needles, it is worth three hundred and fifty dollars; if wrought into penknife blades, it is worth thirty-two thousand dollars. And if it is wrought into springs for watches, it is worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. What a drilling the poor bar must undergo to be worth a higher value. But the more it is manipulated, the more it is hammered and passed through the fire, and beaten and pounded and polished, the greater the value. Those who suffer most are capable of yielding



most; and it is through pain that God can get the most out of us."

The testing of faith produces endurance, which is the ability to turn trials into greatness for God's glory. Such steadfastness to endure comes as a product of the trials, being "tested and approved" and deemed genuine.

The perfecting work of patience in our trials

The testing of faith by trials builds up a Christian's endurance, patience and fortitude. God allows trials for our good and He uses them to strengthen our character. Without trials, our faith can never be fully tested and proven as genuine Christian faith. The Word of God says, "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" (James 1:12).

I would like to end this article about "patience and endurance in trials" with an excellent exhortation from Rev. James Smith's "The Believer's Daily Remembrancer" (also known as *The Pastor's Morning Visit*). While expounding James 1:4, "Let patience have her perfect work", he wrote:

"Patience supposes trials and troubles; it signifies to remain under a burden; it is opposed to fretfulness, murmuring, haste, and despondency; it produces submission, silence before God, and satisfaction with His dealings. The Holy Spirit produces this grace by means of afflictions; tribulation worketh patience. Every Christian is supposed to possess it, and is required to exercise it; yea, to let it have its perfect work. To this end, let us study the examples of suffering and patience set before us in the Bible; let us take up and plead God's promises; let us remember that eternal love appointed every trial and trouble; that Jesus forewarned us of tribulation; that He has set us an example which we are required to imitate.

Impatience dishonours our profession, and grieves the Spirit; patience benefits others, and is of great advantage to ourselves. Let us watch against temptations to impatience, and in patience possess our souls. So shall we fill up our character as Christians; complete the evidence of our sincerity; and prove our principles divine. *Dear Lord, though bitter is the cup, Thy gracious hand deals out to me, I cheerfully would drink it up;—That cannot hurt which comes from Thee. The gift of patience Lord impart, To calm and soothe my troubled heart.*"



"Patience! We all have a large stock of it—until we need it, and then we have none. The man who truly possesses patience is the man that has been tried. What kind of patience does he get by the grace of God? First, he obtains a patience that accepts the trials as from God without a murmur. Calm resignation does not come all at once; often long years of physical pain, or mental depression, or disappointment in business, or multiplied bereavements, are needed to bring the soul into full submission to the will of the Lord. After much crying, the child is weaned; after much chastening, the son is made obedient to his Father's will. Oh, brother, if your troubles work you to that, you are a gainer, I am sure, and you may count them all joy."

C. H. Spurgeon



PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Tan Kian Sing

The foundation of a blessed and successful marriage is love. But the love that is needed to build a strong marriage is not the kind of selfish love that seeks to gratify one's own needs. It should be a love that does not only keep the passion, intimacy and commitment within a marriage going but is also able to survive the storms of life. Such kind of love that is necessary to bind the husband and wife together for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, as long as they both shall live, is the kind of love defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 by the Apostle Paul as: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The Word of God gives further instructions on how both husband and wife ought to exercise such kind of unselfish and committed love towards each other. The husband is commanded to love his wife. And the wife is instructed to submit to her husband. This, to me, is a perfect pattern of patient and enduring love between husband and wife that will see them through their lifelong love and commitment to each other.

In Colossians 3:18, the Word of God gives instructions for the wives: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Wives, and ladies who will be wives in future – this is what you are to do.

The wife is to subject herself to her husband (Genesis 3:16), to take a subordinate place, to obey him. It means not to usurp the husband's authority over her (1 Timothy 2:12). It means she must honour her husband, reverence him, not to undermine him, but to respect him. It means she has to humble herself and recognise that the husband is her head and the head of the family (1 Corinthians 11:3). She is to love him and support him in performing his role as a husband and father (Titus 2:4).

Note that the word "submit" is a command that a wife ought to keep on submitting herself willingly to her husband. In other words, a wife must always obey her husband without coercion.

This is indeed a good advice to wives. A wise and Christ-honouring wife will do her utmost to obey these instructions. She will not undermine her husband's leadership, for doing so will mean disunity and friction in her marriage, or a broken family. She will not be the commanding officer in the family. Let the husband perform that role. It is his God-given role. I often hear of men who like to refer to their wives as the CO – "commanding officer". It implies that the wife is the one in charge in the family. No! This is unbiblical. Let no Christian husband say such a thing. Your wife has to submit to you. You are in charge, not her, and in all areas.

There are women who consider themselves as not the 'submissive type' by nature, and so they find it very difficult to practise these instructions on submission. But like it or not,

it is imperative that wives are to submit to their husbands. It is not a matter of choice. It is a matter of obedience. If a wife chooses not to obey this divine order, she has to bear the consequence of a trouble-filled marriage life. If you do not want your marriage to be on the rocks, be sure to stand firm on the solid Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, you should not marry.

The Bible goes further to say that it is fitting in the Lord that wives are to submit to their own husbands. Why is it fitting? In a similar passage in Ephesians 5:22-24, the Bible says more, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Here the Word says "wives are to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord," and then goes on to explain that it is because the husband is the head, just like Christ is the head of the church – His bride. So wives are to subject unto their husbands as the Bride (the Church) is subject to the Bridegroom (the Lord Jesus Christ).

Let me ask the wives and our ladies this question. Do you serve the Lord lovingly, obediently, willingly, reverently and sacrificially? If you do, then do the same in serving and loving your own husbands or husbands to be. This is God's will as to how you should conduct yourselves in your relationship with your own husbands.

The Bible also says, "Wives are to subject to their own husbands in every thing." Yes, the Word of God commands that the submission is in everything, not in something only, but everything; not only in things which you think you should, but in everything, always and in

every respect. I know of a certain wife who tells many people all the bad things about her husband. Yet she claims that she has been submissive to him. By undermining, insulting, criticising, condemning her husband, she is not submitting to her husband in everything.

Next we look at God's instructions to the husbands. Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." It takes both husband and wife to make the marriage work. Wives are to do their utmost in submitting, and husbands must play their part in order that the marriage relationships may not encounter friction and difficulties. To respond to the wife's submissive love, the husband must show active love towards his wife.

The word "love" used here is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 13. It is a love based on choice, the will, and action. Not a feeling. Feelings come and go. But the love here is a kind of love that the husband must choose to give. By this act of love, he highly regards the wife and is loyal towards her. He appreciates her deeply, values her, considers her importance in his life, and places his wife first in his affections. In fact, the Word of God commands that husbands are to actively love their wives always. Failing to do so is a sin of disobedience and rebellion against God's command.

A perfect pattern for husbands to follow in loving their wives in the way that is demanded of them is to look at how Christ loves the church – His bride. The Bible in Ephesians 5:25 also says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," and then in verses 28-29, it continues, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but

nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”

How does Christ love His bride? He gave Himself for her! It is a sacrificial love. Yes, it is a love which leads our Lord to His cross. How do we, husbands, love our wives? Are we prepared to die for them?

God says this is how men ought to love their wives as themselves. What do we do with ourselves? We do not hate or disregard or despise, but we nourish and cherish. To “nourish” is to provide food that is needed in order to raise up. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” He is worse than an unbeliever who may still provide for his loved ones.

But some men may wrongly perceive that if they work very hard to earn a living to provide for their wives and families, they have done their duties as husbands and fathers. The Bible does not say that husbands are to only nourish their wives, but also to cherish without hatred or disregard. To “cherish” is to take care of, to show tender love, to show warmth, to comfort, to foster, to encourage and to promote a relationship and its development. This is how a man ought to love his wife.

So providing for the wife and family is important and necessary. But that is not all in the duties of a husband. He has to spend time with the wife and to cherish the relationship as well.


Is there any husband who continues to stick close to his mother, friends or old way of life than to his own wife? If you are still doing that, then you are rebelling against God’s will for the Bible instructs: “Therefore shall

a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Husbands beware! God is witness to the way you mistreat your wife. And you have to account for it all before His throne. The Lord God warns against a husband who is treacherous towards his wife (Malachi 2:14-15).

The Word of God also commands that the husband is not to become bitter against his wife. This means that though the wife may do



something towards him that is undesirable, the husband must not allow himself to become indignant, angry, resentful, nor to be harsh, be irritated, be exasperated (annoyed and upset), nor to allow himself to foster bitter feelings towards his wife. Love her sweetly.

Every husband and wife must take the biblical instructions to love and to submit to each other with serious solemnity. Consider your part and do it well. Do not think of changing the other person. Attempt rather to change yourself. If every husband and wife would have such a mindset, the wife loving submissively, the husband loving actively, and both faithfully committed to the biblical pattern of love with patience and endurance, their marriage will be richly blessed in the Lord Jesus Christ. 

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Jeffrey Khoo

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

I am sure all of us who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ are looking forward to seeing Him either when He comes back or when we are called home. I am sure we also desire to have a good report before Him, and to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).



Apprehending Christ

The Lord’s commendation, “Well done”, will only be heard by believers who strive to glorify Christ in their lives on earth. In Philippians 3:9-16, Paul spoke of his constant struggle to glorify Christ in his life. The Christian life is something that must be “worked out” until resurrection happens (cf. 2:12). The believer has not yet attained perfection but must always strive towards it (v. 12). The word “perfect” (*teleioo*) here (and also *teleioi* in v. 15) does not mean sinless perfection but spiritual

maturity. It speaks of the process by which the believer will gradually become spiritually mature and ultimately complete in Christ in both body and soul. In the Christian’s struggle towards perfection, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are at work. Although Christ has already apprehended believers (divine sovereignty), yet they have a duty to apprehend Him (human responsibility). This is the teaching of the fifth point of Calvinism—

the perseverance and preservation of the saints. The believer perseveres in his faith because God preserves him right till the end. As Calvin said, “Paul was apprehended by Christ that he might apprehend Christ; that is, that

he did nothing save by Christ’s influence and guidance.”

Running the Race

In Philippians 3:13-16, Paul speaks of his constant struggle towards spiritual progress and maturity. Such a relentless pursuit to be Christlike does not end until we get to heaven. Paul likens our lives on earth to running a race. Every runner at the starting block aims to cross the finishing line victoriously.

How may we run this Christian race and finish well? Paul tells us how in Philippians 3:13-14, “forgetting those things which are behind, and


reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The word "press" in verse 14 is the Greek word *dioko* which has the idea of relentless pursuit (and often used to mean "persecute", 3:6). If we want to end well in our life as a Christian, we must push ourselves to the limit to become more and more like Christ, and must not quit until we reach the end, until we see Him face to face.

Striving Lawfully

In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul wrote, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." That was why Paul wrote about walking by the same rule and minding the same thing (v. 16). To "walk by the same rule" must mean living according to God's infallible Rulebook which is the Holy Scriptures, and to "mind the same thing" must mean having "the mind of Christ". If we do not run the race according

to God's commandments, having the mind of Christ which seeks only God's glory, we are automatically disqualified.

Some of us may be living hypocritical lives. We say we are Christians, but our lives do not show it. We are living a double life; we are hypocrites. Such Christians who live a double life are running the race too, but they are running backwards, and will never cross the finishing line. They are still unregenerate, and not born again. These are those whom the Lord will say, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). But those who will put Christ first, take His words seriously and obey His commandments, will at the end hear their Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

With much patience and endurance, may we all strive to win our Master's commendation, "Well done!" 

Support the Bible Witness Media Ministry

The Bible Witness Media Ministry has been supported by Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church and like-minded brethren from other churches.

We thank God for everyone who has contributed to this ministry for the past six years. Today, this ministry has gone beyond the printing of the Bible Witness magazine. The Lord has enabled us to reach many more through modern media, such as CDs, VCDs, DVDs, internet, etc. Lately, the ministry has been developing a web radio (please see the back cover) to broadcast sound biblical sermons, songs, devotions, children's programmes, etc., 24 hours a day. It will be launched, God willing, on the 1st of January 2007.

With more open doors and full-time staff, the ministry is in need of more funds. We covet your earnest prayers and generous financial support for the Bible Witness Media Ministry. Please send your gifts to 'Bible Witness' or 'Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church'.

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Boaz Boon

Christian growth (or sanctification) is likened to a marathon race. The runner aims to complete the race to obtain a prize, however long and difficult the race may be. An athlete will not run aimlessly to waste time. The prize of a marathon race may only go to the first three winners but the prize of the Christian race goes to all who run faithfully in the Lord. The world crowns success of the few who made it but the Lord blesses all who run faithfully. Like Paul who wrote, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Our aim and hope in Christian growth is solidly based on the promises of God. With this goal in mind, we can begin to run the race of Christian growth. As mentioned earlier, this race will be filled with obstacles and difficulties. The winners would have exhibited patience and endurance throughout the race, while obeying the rules of the race, i.e., biblical principles.

Patience and endurance are important ingredients in Christian growth. Patience is the ability and willingness to wait or to carry out a task that takes a long time. Endurance is the ability to withstand hardship or stress and still being able to focus on the goal, i.e., hold fast to one's faith in Christ. Both would be tested in difficulties like hostility and persecution. We are commanded by the Lord, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

Christian growth must be guided by biblical truth. However, head knowledge alone is insufficient to ensure success in Christian

growth. As James recorded, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). The Holy Spirit is our teacher. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Christian growth through patience and endurance is not academic but practical. Each child of God will go through different challenging moments in his life where these virtues will be tested and strengthened – crying out, "Lord, I need Thee." But many Christians today live in relatively peaceful places with freedom of worship. How will their patience and endurance be strengthened in Christian growth?

Common Struggles

Let us consider some common situations which call for patience and endurance in the process of Christian growth.

Parents-Children

Patience and endurance are needed when different expectations occur in relationships. Children, not being able to meet parents' expectations of cleanliness, tidiness, and obedience, test the patience of parents. Often you would hear parents scream at their children and such situations turn parents mad. "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).

Bosses-Subordinates

Subordinates tend to vent their anger on their bosses, especially during lunch breaks,

knowing that they can't do anything to change their perceived nasty bosses. Christians need to endure and love such bosses. "For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee" (Proverbs 25:22).

Mothers-in-law & Daughters-in law

Mothers-in-law would have many complaints against their daughters-in-law from household management to idiosyncratic behaviour. The husband is put in a difficult situation of appeasing both parties. However, Christian mothers-in-law should be kind; just as Naomi is to Ruth and vice-versa for daughters-in-law.

Prolonged Illness

People suffering from prolonged illnesses go through emotional peaks and valleys which others may not fully empathize. In such situations, Christians need to endure hardness as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such endurance can only be achieved with the enabling of the Holy Spirit when the person surrenders all to the Lord and completely trusts in the Lord.

Wrongful Accusations

Wrongful accusations can lead a person to retaliate in ways that may lead to harmful, vengeful actions. Christians need to learn from the Lord Jesus Christ who allowed God the Father to judge and do His will, amid wrongful accusations. Christians need to be patient and endure. We can only clarify to a certain extent but at the end of the day, it

is the Lord who will vindicate. Too many a time, we are more concerned with our names being marred by wrongful accusations than the Lord's name being blasphemed by sinners and false teachers.

Biblical Examples

There are many exemplary Christians in the Bible but I will just focus on three. They are the Lord Jesus Christ, David and Job.

The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord created man but He was rejected by sinful men. The Lord showed them the way to eternal life through Himself but sinful men refused to believe Him. They spurned His grace and mercies and crucified Him. The Lord showed them much patience and endurance. Even at the cross, He cried, "... Father, forgive

them; for they know not what they do..." (Luke 23:34). If we think we have been wrongfully accused and suffered through backbiting and unfair treatment, think again what the Lord Jesus went through. Nevertheless, He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). If our creator has shown us the example of patience and endurance, we should follow suit.

David

King David was chosen by God to succeed Saul to be the king of Israel. David and Saul



knew it. Nevertheless, David was patient in waiting upon the Lord for his kingship to be established. Even though Saul treated David viciously and unfairly, David did not retaliate but was humble, exemplifying patience and endurance. Even when David was given the opportunity to harm Saul, he refrained from doing so. He said, "Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed" (1 Samuel 24:10). God was training His servant David through the school of patience and endurance. He passed with God's enablement to the glory of God.

Job

Job loved and obeyed God but he went through testings and trials that were very hard to bear. His wealth and children were all taken away in a day. He turned from tycoon to beggar instantly. His wife was distraught and asked him to curse God and die. His friends added salt to wound by hurling accusations against him, when he needed understanding and comfort. Through it all, Job was patient and endured the sufferings and emerged victorious. He said, "... Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). In the end, the Lord blessed him with even more. His testimony

should challenge us to continue to rejoice in the Lord amid trials and difficulties in life. He said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Conclusion

Therefore, Christians, continue to trust and obey the Lord. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. In addition, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2). Pray for much patience and endurance in your Christian growth.

O to be like Thee, lowly in spirit,
Holy and harmless, patient and brave;
Meekly enduring cruel reproaches,
Willing to suffer others to save.

O to be like Thee, O to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art,
Come in Thy sweetness,
come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.



"Another kind of patience is when experience enables a man to bear ill-treatment, slander, and injury without resentment. He feels it keenly, but he bears it meekly. Like his Master, he opens not his mouth to reply, and refuses to return railing for railing.

Contrariwise he gives blessing in return for cursing; like the sandal-wood tree which perfumes the axe which cuts it."

C. H. Spurgeon



Give Glory to God

One of Jonathan GoForth's favourite stories, excerpted from Chapter 1: "Early Leadings" of Goforth of China by Mrs. Jonathan Goforth.

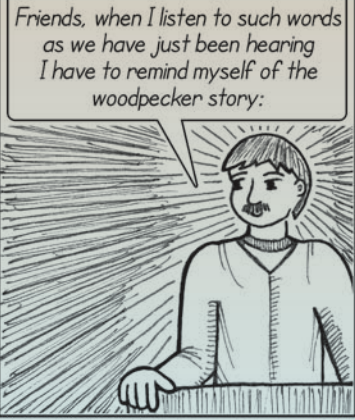
While the Goforths were attending a summer conference, south of Chicago, it was announced that a "brilliant speaker" was to come on a certain day for just one address.



The chairman introduced the speaker with such fulsome praise there seemed no room for the glory of God in what was to follow. The stranger had been sitting with bowed head and face hidden.



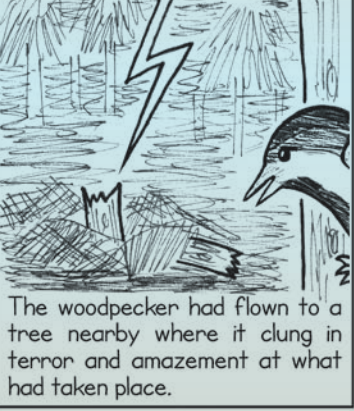
As he stepped forward, he stood a moment as if in prayer; then said:



A certain woodpecker flew up to the top of a high pine tree and gave three hard pecks on the side of the tree as woodpeckers are wont to do.



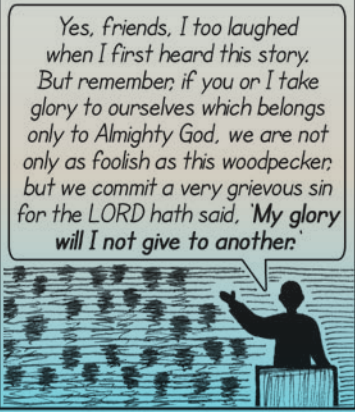
At that instant, a bolt of lightning struck the tree leaving it on the ground, a heap of splinters.



There, it hung expecting more to follow, but as all remained quiet it began to chuckle to itself saying,



When the laughter this story caused ceased, the speaker went on,



Many times Jonathan Goforth, on returning from a meeting, would greet his wife with, "Well, I've had to remind myself of the woodpecker tonight," or, "I've needed half a dozen woodpeckers to keep me in place."



Early in life, he chose as his motto,



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 24

Sarah Yong

MATCH EACH DESCRIPTION ON THE LEFT TO A PERSON LISTED ON THE RIGHT.

1.	He is Abraham's brother, and his wife is named Milcah.	A	Bethuel
2.	He took Rebekah to be his wife and was comforted after his mother's death.	B	Canaanites
3.	She offered water to Abraham's servant and his camels.	C	Servant
4.	She is the wife of Nahor, and the grandmother of Rebekah.	D	Laban
5.	He is described as "old, and well stricken in age".	E	Milcah
6.	She is the mother of Isaac, described in the chapter as "my master's wife".	F	Nahor
7.	God commanded Abraham not to take a wife for Isaac from these people.	G	Isaac
8.	He was sent to look for a wife for his master's son, Isaac.	H	Abraham
9.	He is Rebekah's father, and also the son of Nahor.	I	Rebekah
10.	He is the son of Bethuel, thus Rebekah's brother.	J	Sarah

HIDDEN MESSAGE

CROSS OUT ALTERNATE LETTERS. USE THE REMAINING LETTERS TO FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW.

R M I Z G Y H W T P E Q O V U V S R N Y E H S H S J G B O K D
K L X I M N D E P S Z S X F R A R I F T W H B L G O W V J E U
P Q A O T R I Q E Y N D C X E C M Z E N E D K Y N G E O S B S

But thou, O man of God...follow after _____,
_____.

Answer to Vol. 6, Issue 5 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 23.

Pg. 23 - In this order: 127, Kirjatharba, Heth, Abraham, Hittite, 400, Machpelah & Canaan.
Hidden Message: The just shall live by faith.



BWWR

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We welcome feedback to improve our broadcast.)