

Word Study **Patience**

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The Bible has a great deal to say about the word "patience". I especially want us to consider the Greek term *hupomone*, which is a beautiful word. There is another Greek word for patience – *makrothumia*. ""*Makrothumia*"" will be found to express patience in respect of persons, *hupomone* in respect of things" (R.C. Trench). In fact, *makrothumia* is often the word for "long suffering" in the N.T. Scriptures (A.V.). The Greek term actually comes from two Greek words – *makros* (long) and *thumos* (temper). Those who are long suffering are not those with a short temper.

PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Let us consider some passages where *hupomone* is found. **"But that on the good ground are they, who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."** (Luke 8:15). **"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope..."** (Romans 5:3, 4) **"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."** (Romans 15:4). **"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."** (1 Thess: 1:2,3) **"But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."** (1 Timothy 6: 11) **"For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise."** (Hebrews 10; 36) **"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."** (Hebrews 12:1) **"...knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."** (James 1:3, 4). See also James 5:11; 2 Peter 1:6; Revelation 1:9; 2:2,3,19; 3:10; 13:10 and 14:12). If a saint has to be anything in this world, he has to be patient.

"PATIENCE" DEFINED

But what exactly is *hupomone*? I think it is very easy to lose heart in this modern world. The people of God are surrounded by wickedness of every description. They endure all kinds of trials and tribulations. What they forget is that God could well be putting them to the test to see if they can stand up to the pressures. You see, an untested faith is not worth possessing. So those who are patient are those who, under great siege of trials, never give up and never lose heart. In the end, they are worthy of heaven. William Barclay says that *hupomone* "is the quality which keeps a man on his feet with his face to the wind. It is the virtue which can transmute the hardest trial into glory because beyond the pain it sees the goal". Another writer put it this way: "Patience is steadfast endurance, which causes one to keep on, especially under difficulty, or when facing trial or persecution. It is putting up with things, which go against the grain. It is making allowance for those who do not work the way you would like to see it done. It is resisting the impulse to fly off the handle. And it is

staying with the thing that needs doing even though you are tempted to throw up your hands and walk away from it all." John Chrysostom described *hupomone* as "a root of all the goods, mother of piety, fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbour that knows no storms. It is the queen of virtues, the foundation of right actions, peace in war, calm in tempest, security in plots, and neither the violence of man nor the powers of the evil one can injure it".

We often talk about "the patience of a saint". *Hupomone* is one of the marks of true sainthood. Many people are fiery and quick-tempered. Actually, the characteristic of *thumos* (one of the Greek words for anger) is that it quickly blazes up and quickly subsides. In other words, *thumos* is the explosive and violent temper, which reveals that the individual is in the grip of the flesh or the sinful human nature. Only the power of the Spirit can help him or her overcome this particular sin. Only the power of the Spirit can change someone from manifesting the spirit of blazing anger to manifesting the spirit of steadfast endurance.

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

There are wonderful examples of patient people in the scriptures. There is Job, who is mentioned by James in his epistle (5:11). He was the one whom Satan, under Divine permission, attacked and robbed. Job lost his wealth, his ten children and his health. But he refused to curse God and, in the end, rejected the worldly advice of his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. All his suffering and patience led to a restoration of his health, the doubling of his wealth and the gift of another ten children. I think the book of Job is the most profound work of the Old Testament and I think we should all read it more often and be continuously uplifted by the outstanding patience of this great patriarch.

There is the apostle Paul. He not only wrote about *hupomone*, but also manifested it in his life. Frankly, I do not know how Paul patiently endured all his trials and troubles. He was some man! Lesser men would have caved in long before the imprisonment in Rome. But he believed passionately in Jesus and trusted that the Master would see him through and bring him safely to heaven's shore. On one occasion he wrote: **"I have served more prison sentences! I have been beaten times without number. I have faced death again and again. I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times. I have been beaten with rods three times. I have been stoned once. I have been shipwrecked three times. I have been twenty-four hours in the open sea. In my travels I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen, and from pagans. I have faced danger in city streets, danger in the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing. Apart from all the external trials I have the daily burden and responsibility for all the churches."** (2 Cor. 11: 23b-28, J.B. Phillips). Then there is Jesus Himself. He showed patience in perfection with his family, his people, his apostles, his followers, his friends, the weak, the strong, the powerful, the humble, etc. All circumstances, including humiliation and persecution, were overcome in the spirit of *hupomone*. There is no greater example than personal example and Jesus is our example in all things. He was patient; we must be patient too. Many in the world are restless and quick to move. But we in Christ must learn to wait. I like these words I once copied down:

"There is nothing more Christlike than patience. When we are like to lose our patience at the follies and foolishness of men, let us call to mind God's infinite patience with the wanderings and the disloyalties and the unteachability of our own souls."