

just for deliverance; He wants us to pray for our life to be benefited by the trial. A right use of afflictions is the gaining of more patience. Praying for patience to be the outcome of a trial is *proof* of our trust in God and His Word. We do not want to waste our trials!

As we pray about a trial through which we are suffering distress, we are reminded to pray in faith and have unshaken confidence in God. We are promised to reap blessings as our Father is a liberal giver. Have no fear of being put to shame for your belief in this teaching. This is a means used of God to mature His people. If this teaching (joy in trials resulting in perfecting one's life) is not received, and trials are not prayed over in this way, patience will not be received from the Lord. The trial will have been wasted and serve no good purpose in the life of the one afflicted.

James also reminds us in his epistle to be patient and not grumble.<sup>14</sup> He holds before us again the example of the prophets who suffered persecution but were patient.<sup>15</sup> He adds, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray."<sup>16</sup>

Paul prayed for the members of the church at Colosse. He prayed, in part, for them to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and understanding", to be "fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" and for them to have "all patience and longsuffering with joy".<sup>17</sup> He says nothing about deliverance from persecution, or trials or suffering. He prays for their maturity in several key areas. This is typical of Paul's prayers. We, on the other hand, tend to be concerned in the extreme over relief from suffering and deliverance from trouble. We are to ask our God to impart to us the spiritual rewards of our trials and testings. Patience is such a reward.

## In Conclusion

Now we can bring forth the connection between hope – tribulation – prayer. Without hope, a confidence in God to bring forth good from all things,<sup>18</sup> even the most unpleasant of experiences in life, we cannot pray aright. Knowing that God is good and does only good for His people should dramatically lift our spirits in the midst of trials and give us joy. With the understanding we have received from the Word of God, we are stirred to pray and pray correctly. We cannot just pray for patience and have it supernaturally dropped into our character apart from

the experiencing of trials.<sup>19</sup> As we pray through a trial, not exclusively for deliverance, we pray in hope and with joy as we wait on the Lord to bless. We know we will receive patience through tribulation in prayer.<sup>20</sup> Our Father has told us this as He purposes to use trials for our good.

Robert Smith October, 2004

## REFERENCES\*

1. Hebrews 6:19
2. James 5:11
3. Acts 7:52; Matthew 5:11-12
4. James 1:2-4
5. Hebrews 12:5-11
6. Romans 15:5
7. Romans 5:3-5
8. Colossians 1:11; 2 Peter 1:5-9
9. Hebrews 2:10
10. Hebrews 2:1
11. Ephesians 4:14
12. Isaiah 55:7; Hebrews 2:10
13. Romans 5:3
14. James 5:7-9
15. James 5:10
16. James 5:14
17. Colossians 1:9-11
18. Romans 8:28
19. 2 Corinthians 6:4-6
20. Hebrews 10:36

\*All quotations cited in the text are from the New King James Version of the Bible.



CHRISTIAN FOOD MISSION, INC.  
506 Chantilly Street • P.O. Box 2422  
Laurel, MS 39442  
[www.christianfoodmission.org](http://www.christianfoodmission.org)

# RECEIVING PATIENCE THROUGH PRAYER ©

Romans 12:12

*"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer."*

We are a very impatient people who are easily annoyed by minor delays and frustrating inconveniences. God sends help to His people through attention - grabbing trials. In this short verse there is much truth to consider. Someone once wrote, "Prayer is a friend to hope and patience." Certainly we are to be hopeful and patient in prayer. This is true but it does not go far enough. Hope is essential to prayer, as one cannot pray without hope, but patience issues from the midst of much prayer, as one finds himself in need of deliverance from distress. When we are called to be still and endure trials, prayer is facilitated and patience is learned. Being encouraged to pray will surprise no one, but discovering *how* God instructs us to pray and *why* He does may surprise many who are in search of patience.

## Hope – "Rejoicing in hope"

Hope is not a wish. Wishing is full of uncertainty. We often wish for what is not obtainable. "I wish I had a million dollars! I wish I was the fastest man in the world! I wish I was a great artist (although I'm color blind)!" Hope is not a longing for something either. A longing is earnest desire or a craving. "Oh I want to be cured of cancer for good! Oh, I miss my husband so much since he died!" Hope is different. Hope is desire accompanied with the sure expectation of receiving the thing. This being the case, hope always gives joy, whereas, to wish or long for an outcome may be accompanied by pain and anxiety. To place hope in God, His promises, and the truths of Scripture is to have confidence and trust in them.

Hope is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."<sup>1</sup> To be without hope (hopeless) is to leave one open to any danger. There is no anchor to hold the ship of life when the storms come. Storms will come and the anchor of hope must be let down to avoid being dashed upon the rocks. Hope is that invisible inward strength from which outward patience is manifested.

## Patience – “Patient in tribulation”

Patience has to do with the outward observable temper. To calmly bear provocation, calamity, hardship, pain, affliction, injustice, etc. with perseverance without a show of discontentedness or fretfulness is godly patience.

In context, we are not referring to controlled emotion when being inconvenienced or delayed. Showing no impatience at the slow check-out line in the store or no frustration over road construction which makes one late for a meeting is admirable. This is praiseworthy, but a far cry from the intent of this passage.

Also, we are not referring to an experience like I once had. A long-anticipated evening out to celebrate with my wife involved purchasing tickets for a dinner theatre in a nearby town. We were barely on time and, in the parking lot in my haste, I locked the keys in the car. During the long wait for the locksmith to arrive the dinner was well underway and the performance was soon to begin. Was I expected to wait calmly beside the car in a state of absolute contentment while my wife sat alone at dinner?

Nor are we referring to a painfully long wait in the emergency room to see a doctor in the middle of the night with a sick child while away from home on a trip! To show no evidence of impatience by shifting in the chair and looking at your wristwatch would be a good feat indeed.

All these examples- the minor, everyday ones like waiting in line or being delayed by a detour or the uncommon interruptions in our careful planning, require a degree of patience. It is noticeable that people are naturally endowed with different temperaments. Some are already given to being much more patient in comparison to others. Many recognize their lack of patience and determine to work at becoming more patient and to be not so easily annoyed. We are looking beyond these innate natural abilities and self-determination approaches to those requiring a patience which comes only from God. Patience is widely recognized as a virtue but it is also a grace of God.

Being “patient in tribulation” refers to the exhibition of patience in the midst of severe personal affliction. Typically, patience is needed to endure intense sickness, as in the case of Job,<sup>2</sup> and severe persecution, as in the case of the Old Testament prophets.<sup>3</sup> These examples are given of tribulations to be endured, and the subsequent patience needed, which require more than inborn tendencies and human efforts at betterment.

But there is something more here. The word translated

patience- “hupomone” from the Greek, means more than simply the ability to bear things, it refers to turning those things into advantage as they are borne. We are given a purpose in trials. God uses the afflictions of life to make us better and teach us patience. Patience is a grace and it is taught by trials. By grace we mean it is a favor (or kindness) given by God. How do we receive this grace? Typically through God’s *providence* as trials come our way. Now we find good hidden in the distresses of life.

As remarkable as it may seem to some, we are to find joy even in times of trial because the trials produce patience.<sup>4</sup> We are not to become discouraged when hardships come into our lives because it is God’s way of imparting discipline into our lives.<sup>5</sup> We have reason, as believers, to even savor our sufferings and afflictions as we consider the fruitful benefits of the same. So, through the experiences of trials we are being taught by the God of patience<sup>6</sup> to grow in patience, and by deliverance from the trial we are confirmed in our hope.<sup>7</sup> Godly patience is learned through the unpleasant experiences of life as a loving God matures His people.<sup>8</sup>

You might say, “Wait a minute, in many people the effects are noticeably contrary to this supposedly good result! Hardships and afflictions of the kind you’ve explained cause most people to become more impatient, more unsettled, and more frustrated due to their troublesome circumstances!” This is true but it is not contrary to the clear teaching of God’s Word. The opposite effect is commonly the case because either (1) trials are coming to unbelievers and they have no spiritual understanding or (2) trials are coming to the uninformed believers who can see no good due to their lack of Scriptural understanding. The learning of patience is a God-given benefit to Christians who have faith and trust in their Captain.<sup>9</sup> To non-believers the trials of life are mean with no real purpose; they are simply to be endured as a nasty, albeit unprofitable, fact of life.

Let me digress a moment and speak of Christ as our “Captain”. He is our captain in that (1) He has piloted many to salvation, (2) He is a sure helmsman who will not let His people drift away,<sup>10</sup> (3) His message and work maneuvers His people through the dangers of life so they are not tossed “to and fro,”<sup>11</sup> and (4) He is our supreme example of patience while under severe affliction which perfected (and authenticated) His death on the cross.<sup>12</sup>

## Prayer – “Continuing steadfastly in prayer”

What can a person do to become more patient? This is an important question which has caused me more than a

little reflection. My first thought, as a Christian, was to pray for it specifically. As the result of a discussion with someone it was suggested that people might do things, like purposely choosing the longest line in the grocery store, to teach themselves patience! After searching the Scriptures it was necessary to thoughtfully reconsider. These ideas were concluded to not only be the wrong answers, but the wrong question! The right question is...

What does God do to cause people to grow in patience? We’ve answered this- He uses trials. We cannot do anything of our own design to grow in real patience and we cannot expect to receive patience by requesting it either. On the other hand, we are called to pray aright if we are to grow in patience. How do we pray aright and at the same time not ask directly for patience? Isn’t that a contradiction? James 1:2-6 holds the answer to these thorny questions.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.*

We have read that we are to “glory in tribulations”.<sup>13</sup> Here we are told to find joy in trials knowing that this ultimately produces patience. This working of patience causes us to become mature in our personal growth. Then he says, “If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God”. It may appear that James is talking about patience and then turns his attention to the topic of wisdom. This is not the case. A close study reveals that this entire passage is explaining the connection between trials and patience.

Here is what James is saying. If you cannot believe that you should and can find joy in trials, because the outcome is patience, pray about it and seek wisdom in this matter. We are called to prayer to help our understanding of this truth. We are called to pray that we will have confidence in this teaching. We are not being called to pray generally for wisdom but specifically for help in believing our trials will result in patience and we are to find happiness in them.

It is also true that we tend to quickly request of God that the trial be removed. Our Father wants us to pray not