

THE PATIENCE OF JOB (ST. JAMES V. 11).

“THE patience of Job” has become proverbial. But when we turn to the story, and read the Book as a whole, we may well ask, is that the picture of a patient man who accepts without murmuring or complaint all the evils that befall him? On the contrary, as one of the best commentators on this passage remarks, “Job is not an example of what we should call patience except in his first acceptance of calamity. We should rather say that his complaint in chapter iii., when he curses the day on which he was born, his indignation against his friends for their want of faith in him, his agony at the thought that God had forsaken him, were symptoms of an extremely sensitive, vehement and impatient character which had little of Christian gentleness in it, but excites our admiration by its passionate outbursts of exalted feeling.”¹

These remarks are quite true, and they may be illustrated by many passages from the words of Job. In the 9th chapter, for instance, he accuses God of injustice: “He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked, if the scourge slay suddenly, he will mock at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges hereof; if it be not he who then is it?” (vv. 23, 24). Again: “My soul is weary of my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul” (x. 1). It is clear then from these and other passages, which might be cited, that Job as presented to us in these dialogues is not an example of patience in the accepted sense of the word. Nor indeed is it in this sense that St. James offers the example of Job for our imitation. He is thinking of something higher

¹ The Rev. J. B. Mayor *ad loc.*

than meek and uncomplaining submission to suffering and evil. That is indeed a characteristic Christian excellence which is recognised and illustrated in the context of the passage in St. James, and designated by its appropriate name; but it is not the quality attributed here to Job.

1. A reference to the context in the Epistle will show that St. James is careful to make a distinction between *μακροθυμία*, or longsuffering, and *ὑπομονή*, endurance or fortitude. And it is the latter and not the first which is attributed to Job.

In the preceding verses (8–10 incl.) St. James exhorts his readers to be patient until the coming of the Lord, as the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth (*μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου*), and also cites the prophets as an example of suffering and of patience (*κακοπαθίας καὶ μακροθυμίας*). In verse 11 the form of expression changes. In place of *μακροθυμεῖν* and *μακροθυμία* we have *ὑπομένειν* and *ὑπομονή*. “We call them blessed which endured (*τοὺς ὑπομείναντας*)”; “ye have heard of the patience (marg. endurance) of Job (*τῆν ὑπομονὴν Ἰώβ*), and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.” It is strange that in face of such a marked and undoubtedly intentional change of expression the Revisers should have retained the A.V. rendering of “the patience” of Job, especially as the distinction is observed both in the Vulgate: “*Ecce beatificamus qui sustinuerunt; sufferentiam Job audistis*”; and in the Corbey MS. quoted by Mayor: “*Ecce beatos dicimus qui sustinuerunt. Sufferentiam Job audistis.*”

The Book of Job and the Epistle of St. James may both be regarded as inspired utterances on the subject of temptation and trial, and in each patience is distinguished from fortitude. In the case of Job the two words are characteristic of the two divisions of the Book—the Prologue and the

dramatic Dialogues. In the Prologue—the simple, primitive tradition—Job is represented as a man suffering great and unexpected and undeserved calamity, and meekly submitting to the divine will. In other words, he is an example of patience or *μακροθυμία*. In the dramatic Dialogues—the questionings of a later age on the mystery of Divine Providence—Job, as we have seen, exhibits anything but a patient demeanour. Apart from the loss of material possessions, and the physical suffering or disease he has now to endure the false and mistaken arguments of his friends and their suggestions of his wickedness. He is tortured by his search after truth. He even accuses God Himself of injustice and cruelty. But in his heart he knows that the God whom he defies and accuses is not the real God, the God whom his inmost consciousness knew to be absolutely true and loving and just. And the grandeur of the Book consists in the story of Job's persistent search after truth, in his determination to "endure" until he discover for himself the end of the Lord, the final revelation of the Divine character, and his justification by Jehovah. This came in an unexpected way. No precise answer was given to Job's questionings. No explanation even of his sufferings—the sufferings of an innocent and righteous man. No definite solution of the problem of sin and suffering which so profoundly exercised the minds of religious people in old days. But nevertheless it was an answer that satisfied Job. The voice out of the whirlwind (cf. xxxviii. 1) proclaimed that "the Lord was full of pity and merciful." The rebuke falls upon Eliphaz and his companions, not upon Job: "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right as my servant Job hath" (ch. xlii. 7).

In this narrative two characteristics of *ὑπομονή* emerge, which distinguish it from *μακροθυμία*, namely, voluntary suffering, and suffering endured for the sake of an end to

be accomplished. Job might have quietly acquiesced in his friends' arguments, accepted their conclusions, and received their commendations on his acknowledgment of sin and of the justice of its chastisement. Instead of that he endures their contempt, and brushing aside their arguments goes on until he discovers the truth revealed in the voice of the Lord in the thunderstorm and receives the commendation of the Almighty.

2. This sense of active resistance in *ὑπομονή* (endurance or fortitude) is inherent in the Greek word. It is used, for instance, of the capacity of a sword to resist blows (Polyb. xv. 15, 8), or of a man to resist pain (Plato 62 ff., 412 c). Canon T. Evans in his scholarly edition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiii. 7) paraphrases *ὑπομονή* as: "Vanquishing all assaults of ghostly enemies by a steady front of determined resistance, and invincible courage."¹

3. Although the thought of *ὑπομονή* was from the first a note of Christianity, its place in the Christian vocabulary is chiefly due to St. Paul. The noun occurs in St. Luke alone of the Gospels. But St. Matthew and St. Mark both record the great saying of our Lord, *ὁ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται* (Matt. xxiv. 13. See Mark xiii. 13), "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." A thought which St. Luke expresses by the parallel saying: *ἐν τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὑμῶν κτήσεσθε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν* (xxi. 19), "In your patience ye shall win your souls (*marg.* lives)." Here the conception of voluntary suffering for an end is predominant. With this significance it is a quality ascribed to Christ Himself, who "had power to lay his life down and power to take it again" (see 2 Thess. iii. 5, Rev.

¹ *ὑπό* in composition has often the force of action in an opposite direction as *ὑπολογίζεσθαι*, "to reckon on the opposite side" (*per contra*), *ὑποστρέφειν*, "to turn in an opposite direction, to turn back." See Rid-dell, Plato, *Apol. Socr. Digest.*, 131.

i. 9, and cf. John x. 18) ; and in Hebrew xii. 2 the innermost teaching of *ὑπομονή* and its supreme importance in the Christian life appear in the same connexion : *ὁς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινε σταυρὸν αἰσχύνῃς καταφρονήσας*, “ who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross (or a cross), despising the shame.” It is the end in view, the joyous hope that inspires Christian fortitude.

The use of the word in Colossians i. 11, again in combination with *μακροθυμία* or longsuffering, points to its pre-eminence in Christian character as viewed by St. Paul. The passage forms part of the Apostles' prayer for the converts at Colossæ that they may “ walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God ; strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory unto all patience and longsuffering with joy (*ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν*). Here the Apostle teaches that the end of strengthening through divine power, the purpose for which that divine power is given (all expressed by the preposition *εἰς*), is endurance and longsuffering. Moreover that the line on which this divine strengthening should proceed (*κατὰ*) is “ the might of the glory of God.” That is the might of the glory of God in Christ. For it is quite possible to refer *αὐτοῦ* to the preceding *τοῦ κυρίου* rather than to the preceding *τοῦ θεοῦ*. For Christ is all through, the theme of this outburst of prayer and praise. In that case “ the glory ” (*δόξα*) may well bear the same meaning which it has in John i. 14, that is “ glory as of the only begotten of the Father ” or God, as He was manifested to the Apostle in the person of Christ. Thus interpreted St. Paul's teaching is that to obtain the high quality of Christian fortitude nothing less is needed than the might of the glory of God as manifested to His disciples in Jesus Christ.

4. This was recognised from the first. It was in this spirit that St. Paul undertook his great and perilous task of carrying the mystery of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Like Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior," who,

. "If called upon to face
Some awful moment to which heaven has joined
Great issues,
He through the heat of conflict keeps the law
In calmness made and sees what he foresaw."

And so when St. Paul takes leave of his beloved Ephesian elders at Miletus he has to tell them that they would see his face no more, that in every city the Holy Ghost testified that bonds and imprisonment awaited him. But, he added, "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 22 foll.). A noble example of what St. Paul himself would call *ὑπομονή μετὰ χαρᾶς* (Col. i. 11). And all through the Christian centuries men have, with St. James, "called them blessed that endured" (*τοὺς ὑπόμειντας*), as England and all the civilised world called Captain Scott and his heroic companions blessed when they undertook a noble enterprise and perished in carrying out their purpose. That last message from the Antarctic breathes the very spirit of *ὑπομονή* at its best: "We took risks," wrote Captain Scott, "and we know we took them. Things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, and bow to the will of Providence, determined to do our best to the last." It is this sense of purpose and pertinacity in spite of suffering that makes *ὑπομονή*, or fortitude, a higher and more inspiring quality than *μακροθυμία*, or longsuffering. It contains the secret of success in every endeavour. It is the note of strenuous lives, the characteristic of all who, with some

great purpose in view, have nobly endeavoured as pioneers of great causes, such as the abolition of slavery, the amelioration of prison life, the advocacy of temperance, and all those who, like Job, have discovered truth and upheld it at the price of suffering :

“ Strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” ¹

ARTHUR CARR.

¹ So completely had *ὑπομονή* been identified with Christian character that it gave point to the Emperor Julian's sneer when the Christians complained of their treatment by pagan governors: “ Bear it patiently,” he said, “ as your God commands you.” Soer. *H.E.*, III. 14.