

## LETTING PATIENCE WORK

By Mark Lindley

The Christian life can be very challenging. Due to the many obstacles and trials Christians encounter, we need to “let patience work.”

James wrote the following about the need to let patience work: “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.” (James 1:2-4.) Notice the statement: “let patience have its perfect work.”

James informs Christians that we need patience when facing various kinds of trials. “Patience” means “endurance.” Christians may have to cope with the criticism of non-Christians, financial loss, family problems, failing health, and many other trials. Patience is the virtue needed in such times.

The passage teaches that Christians must “let patience have its perfect work.” If we do this, then we will be “perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” This sounds appealing, so how do we let patience work? First, consider that we do not let patience

work when we hinder or interrupt the process of enduring trials. When facing challenges, we may feel tempted to panic.

Sometimes people try to run from problems, and escape through drug abuse and alcohol. Others may turn toward illicit relationships with the opposite sex to find comfort. However, turning to these things to escape problems only creates more problems.

“What, then, is the solution? How does one allow “patience to have its perfect work?” There are three basic things we can do to let patience work: 1) We should not try to squirm out of trials. Since trials present an opportunity to grow, we should face them. Rather than running from the problems, the psalmist wrote, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10.) Just be still. 2) We should trust that God will work things out in His own time. Trials will not last forever. Rather than rushing God, we should be patient, listen, and learn lessons as life is happening. (James 1:19.) 3) We should pray that God would use

this trial to make us stronger. Prayer is an act of submission, showing that the one praying relies on God. (James 1:6-7.)

By remaining calm, trusting God, and praying to God, one allows patience to work. After patience completes its work, then one will be “perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

So, in trials, let patience work!

— Ripley, MS

“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5.) “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:6,7.)

## GOD’S LOVE INSIDE US

By Danny Tunnell

“He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:9.) “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.” (Romans 5:5.)

It’s interesting that the first statement Jesus made relative to prayer was about praying for our enemies. “You have heard that it has been said, you shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:43-44.)

The love of God inside us enables us to do what Jesus said.

Jesus taught about the God-kind of love that resides in all His followers. He said, “You have heard that it has been said, you shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.”

(Matthew 5:43.)

The only Bible the Jews had was the Old Testament. But they didn’t even have that in their homes. The Old Testament was written on scrolls, and the law was read in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Jesus didn’t come to destroy the old law; He came to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17.) Jesus greatly expanded on what the Jews had learned under the old law. He told His followers about the God-kind of love, this “agape love.”

It takes divine love to love your enemies.

The Jews had a difficult time understanding what Jesus was saying. They had focused on God as a God of judgment. Perhaps they had given little thought to the love of God, His forgiveness and compassion.

For us today, we have all of the Bible. We have Paul’s words teaching

that God enables us to do what Jesus told His disciples to do - to love our enemies. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.” (Romans 5:5.)

It is God’s love inside us that enables us to do what Jesus said: “I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

— Miami, OK

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:20,21.)

# Old Paths

Vol. 43, No. 7 July 2019

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## HARD HEARTS MAKE HARD LIVES

By Danny Boggs

The wise man said, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” (Proverbs 13:15.) It’s still true, though we don’t always believe it. Often we feel more the way the Psalmist did: “Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence.” (Psalm 73:12-13.) People spit in God’s face, get away with it, and even prosper. We try to live right and wonder whether the Lord even notices!

Why do some people live with such neglect of their spiritual natures? The answer is hard hearts. And why do Christians envy the ungodly? Same answer. “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; while it is said, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.’” (Hebrews 3:14-15.) Sin dupes God’s mockers into believing that pleasure is their lot for life. Sin makes Christians think it is better to feel good than to do good.

The most notorious hard heart belonged to the Pharaoh who refused to release God’s people from bondage. The Bible makes twenty references to his calloused condition. It sometimes says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (e.g. Exodus 8:32), while in other cases it tells us that “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart. (e.g. Exodus 9:12.) It appears God exacerbated the stubbornness Pharaoh harbored in his heart. It took ten plagues, the last being the near simultaneous death of every firstborn son in Egypt, including Pharaoh’s, before the wicked ruler would bow to the will of the Almighty. One hard-hearted man, blinded by his own arrogance, brought untold suffering on a whole nation that depended on him.

Jesus asked His own disciples more than once whether their hearts were hard. (Mark 6:52; 8:17.) Could a person spending 24 hours a day in the presence of the Lord have a hard heart? Jesus says so.

God will not force us to enjoy Christian life. Rather, He attempts to persuade us with love and truth. When will we stop ignorantly envying sinful life? Only when we recognize how wonderful life in Christ really is! “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way . . .” (Ephesians 4:17-20.)

Christianity is no bed of roses, but the hardship it brings is far different from the messes that result from fighting against God. Suffering which results from doing right is educational, limited, and promising. (Romans 5:1-5.) Suffering which results from doing wrong is mere misery when it doesn’t help us see the need to repent. “Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” (Proverbs 28:14.)

— Neosho, MO

## Son of Jesus or Son of the Devil?

By Joe Slater

On Paul’s first missionary journey the proconsul (governor) of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, summoned him and Barnabas “and sought to hear the word of God.” (Acts 13:7.) One of his advisors, a sorcerer and false Jewish prophet named Bar-Jesus, did his best to resist them and “turn the proconsul away from the faith.” (vs. 8.) “Bar” means “son of,” but it is highly unlikely that Bar-Jesus had been named in honor of our Lord. Jesus (“Yahweh is salvation”) was a very common name among first-century Jews.

His name did, however, turn out to be rather ironic.

He was commonly known as Elymas, the Arabic form of “magi” which means wise man. That, too, was ironic. Aside from being a false prophet and practicing sorcery, resisting God’s message and His messengers wasn’t among the wisest things Elymas ever did!

Paul would tolerate none of it. He “looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.” (Acts 13:9-11.)

Elymas was anything but “son of Jesus.” He was a son of the devil! (diabolos = slanderer.)

Are you living up to your God-given name, “Christian?” (Acts 11:26.) Just wearing it doesn’t make you a true follower of the Anointed One.

You confessed Him as Lord. “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46.)

Be truly wise! Be a son of Jesus!

— Justin, TX

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2:6.) “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” (Ephesians 5:1,2.)

**CARRYING OUR CORNER**

By Richard Dent

In the gospel account of Mark, we read about a man who was a paralytic. (Mark 2:3-12.) This man was unable to come to Jesus by himself so he required assistance from others. Fortunately, he had some friends who were able to help him. The Bible attests to this man's faith and determination to see Jesus. His friends picked up the bed on which he was lying and carried him to the house. Not just one or two men could have brought the paralytic to Jesus. It took all four friends carrying their corner to get the job done.

But wait! The story becomes even more intriguing as we find that there were so many people in the house that the four men could not get their stricken friend inside. In Mark 2:4, we find that his friends lifted the paralytic, bed and all, to the top of the roof of the house and then lowered him into the room where Jesus was preaching.

Jesus was impressed with the men's faith and said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." (Mark 2:5.) What a great story of faith and persistence! The man immediately arose and took up his bed as Jesus directed him to do and went out from the presence of them all. Then they glorified God saying, "We never saw anything like this before." (Mark 2:11-12.)

Friend, do you know that there are many in any given community who will never find the truth or hear the words of Jesus about salvation without our help? If any of those four friends had dropped his corner of the bed, the paralytic man could not have found Jesus. As a Christian, have you dropped your corner or are you carrying it to the best of your ability to serve in the vineyard of our Lord?

Every member is needed to shoulder the responsibility for helping the Lord's work progress as it should. We need Bible School teachers. We need parents that set a faithful example for their children to follow. We need men who will dependably serve in a number of ways such as leading public prayers or leading songs in worship. We need men who will aspire to serve as elders and deacons in the Lord's work. Let us all do our best to carry our corner.

— Liberal, KS

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.) "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10.)

EDITORIAL . . .

**BEWARE THOSE WHO DEAL FALSELY**

By Dalton Key

Something has gone terribly, undeniably wrong.

When those in lofty positions of authority speak lies, deceptions, and pseudo-clever half-truths, rejecting the clear path of truth for carefully parsed, semantic mazes, something is just not right.

And it should disturb us all.

Doesn't it bother you to hear untruths presented, promoted, and then defended as true? Doesn't it fuel your fires of righteous indignation to stand by and witness this constant, relentless campaign of calculated subterfuge? It seems every day - day after day - truth is forced to take a backseat to outright lies, being spun and spun and then spun some more until little is left but the crumbs of what once was.

Please don't misunderstand.

For the moment, I'm not talking politics. I'm referring to religion.

Something is wrong when religious teachers and preachers . . .

. . . in the face of clear passages such as Mark 16:16 insist that baptism has nothing to do with one's salvation from sin.

. . . despite Paul's unmistakable language in Ephesians 4:4, assure their hearers that one church is just as good as another.

. . . in shameful disregard for the words of Jesus in John 8:32, teach that spiritual and moral truth is altogether subjective, and thus varies from person to person and from situation to situation.

Yes, when supposed proclaimers of truth seem to do anything and everything but actually proclaim truth, something has gone wrong.

Jeremiah's words of long ago, "From the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely," could just as well have been written concerning similar shenanigans of our day. (Jeremiah 6:13.)

Perhaps now we know why Jeremiah has long been known as "the weeping prophet."

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned into fables." (2 Timothy 4:2-4.)

**A LESSON FROM THE PAST**

By Bobby Key

The preacher of the gospel should not be overcome with material things. He must not lose sight of spiritual values. It is unwise to turn aside after things that perish while neglecting the great things that will outlive him.

One is a hireling who preaches simply for what he can get out of it from a financial standpoint. I am afraid for the preacher who is forever seeking better and more comfortable quarters, bigger and better churches, and bigger and better salaries.

It is true that the laborer is worthy of his hire, but the servant of the crucified Master ought not to be a seeker after luxury.

Preachers of today have it so much better than those of yesterday. Over a century ago, brother James A. Harding said to a young man, a student in the old Potter Bible School in Bowling

Green, Kentucky, "Frank, I want you to hitch up the carriage and drive me to the depot. I must leave for a Meeting." When this young man stopped in front of the Harding home a little later, Mrs. Harding was inquiring how her husband expected to buy a ticket without money. That good servant was heard to reply, "I'll go as far as I can." The trip into Bowling Green was made without further word of ticket or money.

Soon after entering the little city, a man waved for the carriage to stop, explaining that for some time he had desired to have fellowship with Harding in spreading the gospel of Christ, and handed him a twenty dollar bill. At the depot he purchased his ticket, turned to Frank, and placing every bit of the change in his hand, instructed that it be given to his wife.

Harding then boarded the train and continued his journey to some favored place to tell of Him who said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33.)

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6.)

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28.)

**SINS FORGIVEN**

By Milton Smith

In this world, nothing could be farther removed than the "east is from the west." And as the poet has written, "never the twain shall meet." This is how far God has removed a person's sins from him the moment he stands pardoned through Christ's blood. Other passages in the Bible declare that our sins are cast behind God's back, cast into the depths of the sea, and remembered no more. In other words, they are gone!

Charles Spurgeon once wrote: "Our sins are removed from us by a miracle of love. What a load to move, yet it is removed so far that the distance cannot be measured." A person could never lift the burden of sin from off his back by his own power and volition. Only God can perform this task. Yet each person's sins are his own doing. It has been said that one's sins are the only thing that are truly his own. If man could remove his own guilt of sin, the death of Jesus would have been the most futile and useless act in history (not to mention a waste

of time). As the prophet Isaiah looked to the coming of mankind's Redeemer, he wrote, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him . . . and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5,6.)

Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, "But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The prophet Isaiah knew this, and though he lived many years before Christ's flesh, his inspired pen anticipated Jesus's saving work as though it had already been accomplished. In the same manner, the psalmist wrote, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12.)

Through the Lord's death, He satisfied all the demands involved with perfect forgiveness. To sinners everywhere, Jesus says, "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew

11:28.) The removal of the guilt of sin is the most beautiful and peaceful rest a human being can experience in this life.

— Tulsa, OK

**Old Paths**829 S. Rockford Ave.,  
Tulsa, OK. 74120On a nonprofit basis.  
Published monthly and  
supported by Churches of Christ  
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor

"Subscription Free;

Prayers Requested;

Contributions Appreciated."