

Hope That Patiently Endures

By Ginny Larsen

*“Waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

(Titus 2:13 ESV)

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

(1 Peter 1:3)

*“Because thou hast kept the **word of My patience**, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”*

(Revelation 3:10-11 KJV)

In a day when evil abounds and the hearts of men are failing them for fear, the Christian is drawn all the more to see a hope beyond anything this world or this temporal life can offer. Because of our “blessed hope,” we learn to endure patiently, just as Jesus Himself endured patiently *“for the joy set before Him”* (Hebrews 12:2). The Rapture of the Church is such a precious promise to those who are heaven-bound. We know we are citizens of heaven, not this earth, though we walk here now as pilgrims. The more the days grow hostile against the Lord and against those who love Him the more we feel like aliens in a weary land, seeking our home country, longingly, eagerly, fighting the weariness of this life. It’s easy to faint. It’s easy to lose hope. But our eyes must be on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: *“And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”* (Luke 18:1).

The Rapture of the Church produces that hope, that power and strength in our inner being that sustains us. It produces patient endurance and longsuffering toward those we must deal with. It reminds us that He has not forsaken us and just left us into the hands of evil men. It renews our energy when we become weary in well doing. It gives us the “want-to” to keep on “keeping on” for Christ. It invigorates our love for Christ and for one another. It reminds us when our eyes drift to the things happening around us that this has all been foretold by our Lord and that because He has all in His hands, we can patiently endure, knowing He will fulfill all. We have a “living hope” —one that will never perish or fade away, kept in heaven for us. We have a sure Word of promise. We have a joy that we can rejoice in even now as we go through various trials of our faith.

Patience—it is a word we don't really like, because we know patience means waiting, enduring, suffering—all the things that we wish would hurry up and end. Patience is of God and is possible because of His promise and His presence in us. Patience, according to Vine's NT:

1. hupomone (G5281), lit., “**an abiding under**” (hupo, “under,” meno, “to abide”)...and, “In 2 Thess. 3:5, the phrase ‘the patience of Christ,’ RV, is possible of three interpretations, (a) the patient waiting for Christ, so KJV paraphrases the words, (b) that they might be patient in their sufferings as Christ was in His, see Heb. 12:2, (c) that since Christ is ‘expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet,’ Heb. 10:13,

so they might be patient also in their hopes of His triumph and their deliverance. While a too rigid exegesis is to be avoided it may, perhaps, be permissible to paraphrase: ‘the Lord teach and enable you to love as God loves, and to be patient as Christ is patient.’”

If we had no hope, there could be no patience to endure but what we could find of life in this world. Those whose hearts are set on some sort of happiness or fulfillment in this world will be disappointed, and sadly many Christians today are hearing this kind of message of fulfillment in this life, rather than seeing what the Lord has called us to. There is confusion and life becomes a choice between the way of the world and the walk He is calling us to in holiness and love for God. Loving God and obeying His Word comes more and more in contrast to what we desire of this world. Those who are of this world and Christian in name only will compromise with the world and take its side, joining the apostate church which is hostile to the true Jesus, rather than a partner in Christ's sufferings and counted with Him. But what keeps us, what sustains us, what encourages us on in the patience that “remains under” the persecution, the hatred, the enduring evil, is that hope of His return, that promise of our final redemption, knowing that soon this corruption will put on incorruption, that we will be like Him and with Him where He is forever more. And we know that could be any day, at any moment.

We are to encourage one another with this hope. *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

How much we lose then, if we do not understand this Rapture of the Church that the Lord fore-told and promised. His assurance of it is a gift given to strengthen, encourage, enliven, sustain, empower, and drive us on until that day. He gives us all we need to live Godly lives in Christ Jesus. We miss out, sadly then, if we do not have our hope in the right place and if we do not see this great thing He has given us. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; **that where I am, there ye may be also**”* (John 14:1-3).

This is His purpose for His church - that where He is we may be also! And it is His very Spirit He has given to us as a down payment or earnest, sealing us unto that day, giving us the assurance of it. *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory”* (Eph. 1:13-14).

Because of that assurance our hearts are filled with the love and joy that enables us to live for Him with energy and steadfastness as we wait for His coming. May the Lord fill our hearts daily with the strength and hope of His promise as we patiently endure.