

Cornelius Aurelius, *The Treatise of Patience* [1524]  
Chris L. Nighman, translator (2019)

Chapter 1: Patience has its origin in God himself.

“And so for us the virtue of patience is something we have in common” (incredible to say) “with God himself. Therefore from Him,” according to Cyprian the Martyr, “patience has its  
5 beginning; from Him clarity and dignity shine forth.” Therefore, patience, which is amazing in a manner familiar to our lord God, and was always most pleasing, must be loved by us most highly. Behold, my fellow brother in Christ who has the same name as mine, Cornelius, the good which divine majesty so greatly encompasses and loves, commends itself undoubtedly even to us to be loved seriously. “In your patience,” he says, “you shall possess your souls.” But how? If  
10 God is both our Lord and Father, it is right that we imitate the patience of God equally and that of our father because it is proper in every law for servants to be obedient to their master and for sons likewise to not be unworthy of their father. But now let us see what kind and how great the patience of our God has always been. Behold how God, “most patiently enduring the many images of gods, temples, profane rites set up by humans in affront and contempt of his majesty,  
15 ‘makes the sun shine on both good and evil people,’ and nourishes all lands equally with rain.” No one at all is excluded from his benefits, who bestows indiscriminating harvests of the fields upon the just and the unjust alike. Is it not of his will and undistinguishing equity that, as the Lord degrades, the very seasons yield and the elements give service to both the guilty and innocent, to the religious and impious, to the grateful and ungrateful?” Behold how all are served  
20 with equal favour by “the blowing winds; we see fountains sweetly flow, harvests increase in abundance, fruits of the vines ripen, orchards being refilled with apples, groves greening, fields laughing, and meadows blossoming. And although persistent and daily “offenses provoke Him, nevertheless He tempers His anger and patiently waits for the day of retribution which He once foreordained.” Amazing if we are not amazed that He endures sinners with such patience and  
25 compassion, who could exercise immediate vengeance upon them. However, He truly delays it, indeed by that reason and cause, “so that, if it may be possible, with malice being protracted for awhile, the person may be converted to the Lord, who says through the prophet: ‘I do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live.’ And again through Joel: ‘Return to your Lord God because he is merciful and pious and patient and of much compassion and excellent  
30 above malice,’ and who easily averts a sentence imposed against the impious.”

Chapter 2: Patience alone perfects man in the way of virtues  
and distinguishes the sons of God from the sons of the devil.

35 Behold, Cornelius, most sincere of friends and most skilled man of law, because patience itself is an attribute of God, according to Cyprian, and extremely exceptional, and he who is found to be patient and mild appears to be an imitator of God the father. God did not consider in all his wisdom how he taught disciples more towards perfection than exhort them to patience, saying:  
40 ““Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven, and who makes the sun to shine on the good and the evil, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t also publicans do the same? And if you were to salute your brothers, why would you do more?”

Don't heathens do the same?' And then he entered, saying: 'Be perfect, just as your heavenly  
 45 father is perfect.'" "Patience and long suffering in all things." O health-giving example of divine  
 piety, o inexpressible and unheard of doctrine for all the ages! Who, I implore, has ever heard  
 such things? Behold that master who is not deceived and does not deceive, who affirms us then  
 to become perfect sons of God, and who teaches us to be perfected in virtues, since the patience  
 of God the father remains in us, and since semblance of divine patience is manifested and shines  
 50 forth in our works. O Hoen, brightest of men, what a glory (you think) it is to be truly similar to  
 God? You consider what kind and how much happiness we have in virtues which can even be  
 equated to divine praises. "Be perfect," he says, "just as your father in heaven is perfect." "Let us  
 glory in our tribulations," most agreeable fellow brother, "knowing that tribulation brings  
 patience, and patience brings approval, and approval brings hope, and hope does not confuse." It  
 55 is only patience that particularly tests whether we are sons of God the father or sons of the devil,  
 according to Isaac the Patriarch who says: "Come here, my son, so I may touch you," namely  
 with tribulations, and I may determine whether you are my son, patiently bearing my hand, or  
 not. "For the Lord loves him whom he chastises, but he scourges every son whom he receives."  
 Therefore, whoever does not persist in his teaching through patience, but rather indignantly  
 60 rejects it, becoming impure thereby, ceased to be a son of God. "Do not fend off," says  
 Augustine, "your father's whip from yourself, if you do not wish to be disinherited. Do not  
 concern yourself with what penalty you may have from the scourge, but rather what place you  
 will hold in the will." For indeed we are sons of God, according to Scripture, "through the bath  
 of regeneration," by which heavenly birth we are restored. Therefore, "if we are sons, then also  
 65 heirs, indeed heirs of God, co-heirs of Christ; yet if we suffer with him, we will be glorified" as  
 coregents. And so, my brotherly equal, let us endure with all patience and meekness the scourges  
 of the most pious father so that we may avoid the scourges of the harshest tormentor. For indeed  
 patience, as we have said before, creates a proof, that is, the purgation of sins; just so, every  
 bitter concoction of the antidote expells corruption from the body. And just as contrition of the  
 70 heart removes the stain of sin, so too without a doubt, tribulation itself almost takes away the  
 offence, if we bear it with a patient spirit. And finally, according to Paul, this testing, touching  
 and purgation leads to the firmest hope and the certain expectation of eternal bliss, when<sup>1</sup> we are  
 freed from the blame of faults that is now abolished in us and from the penalties, access to glory  
 will be given, according to this of the Evangelist: "Blessed are the patient, for theirs is the  
 75 kingdom of heaven."

Chapter 3: Christ teaches us patience not only in word but also in deed,  
 and he reveals to us the amazing patience in himself.

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But why should we say more? Does not the Lord teach us his patience by word and also show it  
 to us in deed? Marvelous in a way beyond what the human mind can either believe or  
 understand! The richest examples from his work profess Christ's patience to us. Among all the  
 marvels of his virtues, by which he expressed the signs of his divine majesty, he always  
 85 maintained amazing patience. For, as I recall from the earliest beginnings, descending from that  
 heavenly height to these worldly things, the son of God did not refuse to take on our flesh, nor to  
 be painfully circumcised on the eighth day. Surely he, the Lord of us all, was baptised by a  
 servant. Fasting for forty days and just as many nights, he met with the enemy who tempted him.  
 Bending down to the ground, he washed the feet of Judas, whom until the end he always

90 encouraged (?) with amazing patience to the virtue of a better life, whom he knew to be a domestic enemy but did not reveal it, and he did not in the very least refuse his kiss. O with what great calmness and patience he strove by persuasion to bend the infidels and the Israelites to the faith, encouraging the ungrateful by yielding, responding gently to his detractors, showing his manner to all, enduring the proud and rebellious with mercy, giving himself up to his

95 persecutors! All of these are particularly matters of patience. Moreover, just like a hen with her chicks, he tried to gather together the killers of prophets and those who were always unretrained against his Father right up to the very hour of his Passion. And what happened at length beneath the cross? Before he came to the cruelty of death and the shedding of blood, what taunts of the Jews and the blasphemers, I ask, my Cornelius, did he not hear patiently, what outrages, I ask,

100 what spitting of insulters did he not receive? Why hold back from more examples? He who is the avenger that daily scourges the angel of Satan himself suffered scourges. He who crowns his martyrs with everlasting flowers was himself crowned with piercing thorns. He who grants unfadeable palm leaves to the victorious was struck in the face with palm leaves. He who clothes others with the cloak of immortality was stripped of his mortal garment. He who transformed

105 water into wine and who does not withhold the cup of salvation from anyone was given vinegar to drink. He was also given bile to eat by those to whom he was the provider of honey and manna, which is the most delicate food of angels. The Truth himself was oppressed by false witnesses; the future judge of all was unjustly judged. Kindness is condemned, dignity is mocked, virtue is ridiculed; he who is the provider of sweet rains is drenched with the most fetid

110 spit. And at last the Son of God is led silently like a lamb to the sacrifice. Why are we held back from many more examples?<sup>2</sup> To the Lord's cross: the stars were confounded, the elements were disturbed, the earth quaked, the sun itself (lest He be compelled to see the crime of the Jews) withdrew its rays from the earth. The sudden darkness of night shut out the day, and yet the Lord Jesus did not speak during these wonders, he was not moved, nor did make known his majesty

115 even at the moment of death, but rather he endured everything continuously and persistently until the end, or indeed by that reason and providence, so that full and perfect patience would be consummated in him for our instruction. What at the end? He prayed for his executioners; benign and patient, he denies favour to no one. Not only does he grant forgiveness for their crimes to his adversaries and the enemies of his name, if they repent of their sin, but also the

120 reward of the heavenly kingdom, and He also promoted it, saying: "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they have done." What can be more patiently, what can be more benignly revealed than this word? Even those who shed his blood are brought alive by the blood of Christ. O how great is the patience of Christ which, if it had not been manifested as such, the church would not have had an Apostle such as Paul!

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Chapter 4: The example of patience is not only demonstrated and bequeathed to us by Christ, both God and man, but also by those who are simply people.

130 But perhaps, my Cornelius, you will reflect on these examples and say: Why do you urge me, a mere man with of flesh and a fragile spirit, to the patience of him who is both God and man? Let us come therefore to those who are simply people, and let us diligently consider the patience of our predecessors. And so let us admire the ancient patriarchs and prophets and all the just (who have borne the figure of Christ in their similarity), that in the praise of all their virtues they

135 guarded nothing more carefully than that particular one, that they would maintain patience with a

strong and stable equity. Didn't Abel, the first initiating the origin of martyrs and also the passion of a just man, not fight against his brother Cain, nor did he resist, but was patiently humble and meek as he was killed? Did not Abraham, believing in God and laying the first foundation of the faith, when tested with regards to his son not hesitate, not tremble, but rather  
 140 instantly obey the commandments of the Lord with all devotion and patience? And was not Isaac, when he was offered to be sacrificed by his father, found to be patient as he said to his father: "Father, bind my hands and feet lest I strongly struggle against you"? What shall we say of Jacob, Joseph, Moses and King David and the other fathers? Didn't he (whom I named first), driven away by his brother, patiently leave his paternal home, and later adoring him with greater  
 145 patience, try to reconcile him with gifts? Didn't Joseph, sold by his brothers and sent into Egypt, not patiently forgive them, and also mercifully give free food (when hunger was raging) to those coming to him? Didn't Moses, frequently condemned by the faithless people of Israel and already pelted by a painful hail of stones, patiently and gently intercede on their behalf with the Lord God, saying: "Lord, forgive them for this sin, or blot me out of the book you have written"?  
 150 How at last shall I refer to King David, from whom Christ was born according to the flesh? And so, if we recall piously, then you will easily understand how great and wonderful and almost Christian was the patience he had, when you will remember that he had in hand his enemy King Saul, who was trying to kill him, and could have executed him without a sound, and yet he chose to save the one handed over to him. But not according to the law of Moses, which in those days  
 155 allowed one to take revenge on his enemy, instead after Saul was killed by the Amalekites on Mount Gelboah, David took vengeance on his killer. I turn now to the New Testament. What shall we say of the martyrs, what of the glorious confessors, what finally of the holy maidens, who have all attained the crowns of the heavenly kingdom in triumph and with praise for their patience? For the crown of sorrows and sufferings can never be obtained unless it is preceded by  
 160 sadness. To these we add, not at all improperly, those who have freely committed themselves and their goods for the name of Christ, who besides the constant battles with temptations, gave up their rich patrimonies in the battle of persecutions, and their most lovely wives and their most beloved children as hostages, who gladly submitted to imprisonment, to be oppressed by the weight of chains and their souls equally when they endured threats, swords, beasts, fires,  
 165 scaffolds, in short all types of torments, with the noble virtue of patience, with He himself undoubtedly encouraging and preparing them who said: "If you will remain steadfast," He said, "in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will truly know the truth and the truth will set you free."

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Chapter 5: One must persevere patiently and bravely in doing good things and never abandon doing good works or cease doing them because of impatience.

Do you not see, Cornelius, from the Lord's words how patiently we must both persevere and  
 175 endure in all things, so that having been admitted to the hope of truth and also liberty, we can joyfully attain truth and also liberty through the agonies of our dwelling place? For the very fact (as I may frankly confess) that we are Christians is a matter of faith and indeed of hope. But truly neither hope itself nor faith can attain their goal by one's desire without patience. Therefore, patience is extremely necessary to us, as Paul says: "If we hope for unseen things, we wait for  
 180 them through patience." Without a doubt both expectation and patience are so very necessary for us so that we may fulfill through perseverance what we begin to be in baptism, and so that we

may attain what we believe and hope for with the Lord's help. Paul exhorts us to this, saying: "Let us not abandon doing good; for we if we don't give up we shall gather the harvest in its time." Because our reward will then be eternal, nobody can take it from us. And what may I say?

185 There is never anything more pernicious to a Christian than to fail in a good work through impatience, and to suddenly give up completely, either diverted or overcome by the perverse suggestions of temptations in the midst of praise. The Apostle admonishes us against this, saying, "Do not cast away your confidence which has a great reward." And finally: "For patience is necessary for you so that doing the will of God you may receive what has been promised."

190 And John in Apocalypse: "Keep what you have lest another may take your crown." This exhortation certainly encourages us to persevere patiently and bravely in goodness so that we who strive for the crown and for the praise now almost at hand, with patience enduring to the end, may be more victoriously crowned by the Lord. "A good is surely done in vain, if it is abandoned before the end of life," according to Gregory, and "he who gives up before he reaches

195 the finish line runs quickly in vain." Therefore no good deed, no good virtue, and indeed no good work is perfected unless it is accompanied by patience. For perseverance is like the rational soul in the body, which, although it comes last, yet it completes all of the preceding virtues of the body and the soul. For the vegetative soul and the sensitive soul, according to the Philosopher, are imperfect by their nature. For indeed a whole person is never formed with them unless the

200 final perfection is added with the rational soul, and unless that which was imperfect is finally completed with it. We truly believe thus: although many virtues are found clustered together, yet none are perfect so long as they are not completed and perfected by perseverance just as a person is by a rational soul. And what use is it, I ask, if a tree produces handsome fruit but it is blown down by the wind, not reaching its proper maturity? The Lord confirms this in the Gospel,

205 saying: "Just as a branch cannot make fruit unless it continues on the vine, so neither will you continue except in me." Good, excellent! Without a doubt it profits a person too little, if the fruit of a good work is begun by him, unless it also matures through consistent perseverance. Truly "perseverance is the unique daughter of the highest king, the culmination and consummation of the virtues, the repository of every good, and the virtue without which no one will see God," with

210 the Lord saying: "He who will persevere until the end will be saved." For perseverance is the long coat which Jacob made for his son Joseph; this is the tail of the sheep which is ordered to be offered with the head in sacrifice to the Lord. "It is shameful," says Seneca, "to yield to a burden, to struggle with a duty which you have formerly accepted. "A man who flees labour is neither strong nor vigorous" nor diligent, "unless his spirit increases due to the very difficulty of

215 matters." Whence also Bernard in a certain letter: "Without perseverance," he says, neither does he who fights obtain the victory, nor does the victor obtain the glory. It is the nurse to merit, the mediator to the reward, the sister of patience, the daughter of constancy, the friend of peace, the knot of friendships, the bond of unanimity, the bulwark of sanctity. Take away perseverance and obedience will not obtain its reward, nor will benefit its grace, nor strength its praise." In

220 discipline then, O Cornelius, let us persevere with patience just as God also offers himself to us as His sons.

Chapter 6: Patience not only preserves the good that is in us but also repels bad things from us,  
 225 and patience is the consummation of the other virtues.

And what else? Who can ever sufficiently extoll the glories of patience and indeed with worthy commendations? For it not only preserves what is good in us, but also repels bad things from us. It daily resists with the fortress of its virtues the works of the body and the flesh by which the  
230 soul itself is repeatedly assaulted and captured. Let us consider a few of the many so that the others can be understood from a few examples. Behold, says the Prophet, “lying, fraud, theft, adultery and murder” now reign everywhere among mortals and “overflow” upon the earth “and blood has anointed blood.” And truly may a firm and strong patience be in your soul, and may you neither pollute your body, sanctified to God and made a temple of the Holy Spirit, nor infect  
235 your innocence, formerly dedicated to justice, with the contagion of lying or fraud or cursing, nor seek to pour out the blood of another after partaking the Eucharist of Christ, who exchanged his soul for humans in death. Why in addition did I say that patience is the consummation of all virtues? Because love is the foundation of peace, and the bond of brotherhood, and the solidity of unity, which also greatly surpasses hope and faith, which precedes all works and even  
240 martyrdom itself, according to Paul, which never departs but rather perseveres always with us in heaven. These are the great and true gifts of love. But if you take patience from it, then it does not continue on its own nor does it endure. Take away the substance of suffering, I say, and without a doubt soon it will persist for no one. Because of this the apostle Paul, not without reason or purpose, adds patience to it, saying: “Love is patient, love is kind, it suffers all,  
245 believes in all, hopes for all, and endures all.” And in another place: “With patience supporting one another in love, anxious to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond and unification of peace.” Behold, the Apostle adds that neither unity nor peace can be preserved unless we support one another with mutual patience and guard maintain the covenant of concord through tolerance. Finally, is there anyone who can carry out those evangelical precepts of our Lord, by which it is  
250 said, you will not swear or speak evilly, you will not retrieve things taken from you, when a slap is received you will present the other cheek to the one striking, you will forgive completely all the sins of the one sinning against you not only seven times, but even seventy-seven times, and you pray for your enemies and persecutors? Who, I ask, can convey or fulfill these things unless he holds the solidity of tolerance and patience? Don’t you see, my Cornelius, that patience is the  
255 very salt and seasoning of all virtues? For what food is without salt, that is what the other virtues (however great) are without the mitigation of patience. Indeed it is patience which firmly establishes the foundations of our faith, which lifts up the growth of our hope, which finally directs all of our actions so that we can sweetly maintain the way and examples of Christ, when we diligently live according to his tolerance. Even on its own patience enables us (just as we said  
260 previously) to be and to persevere as God’s sons as our Father’s patience is diligently imitated by us, who, placed here in many fluctuating disturbances of the world and in the persecutions of depraved people and heretics, most patiently await the day of eternal vengeance. What more? Blessed patience preserves integrity in maidens, difficult chastity in widows, and inseparable love in married couples. This virtue renders us humble in prosperity, constant in adversities,  
265 meek and gentle against injuries. It teaches us to quickly forgive transgressors, and if you yourself should offend, it makes you instantly seek forgiveness for the crime. Finally, it subdues the temptations of the enemy, endures persecutions strenuously, and consummates both sufferings and martyrdoms.

Chapter 7: Through patience all vices in us are destroyed, yet the condition of piety is not forgotten, and “the evils which we suffer benefit us greatly, either by washing away sins or by cultivating and proving our justice.”

275 We have said these things regarding the virtues which patience nourishes and consolidates in us; now let us also hear how with its solidity it destroys all vices in us in turn. “Patience,” Cyprian says, “commends us to God and preserves us from every evil. It tempers anger, restrains the tongue, governs the mind, preserves the peace, rules discipline, breaks the impulse of lust, suppresses the violence of pride, extinguishes the fires of jealousy, limits the power of the rich, and soothes the poverty of paupers.” But surely patience does not render the spirit so severe and so conquerable that the condition of ill-boding completely casts piety aside. It truly endures all things calmly, yet deploring nonetheless the stubbornness of unbalanced men and lamenting the distress of friends who have passed. Just as Seneca attests where he says, writing to the apostle Paul: “Do you not think, my Paul, that I am not saddened or sorrowful that punishment is being exacted for your innocence? But let us bear it with a calm spirit, and let us use the forum which fate has decreed, until invincible happiness puts an end to evils.” And in a way equal space is offered to me with Seneca (I will confess frankly and let adulation, which neither my age nor my profession allows, be gone): I was very much carried away with compassion for you, according to sentence of Paul, saying: “If any one member suffers, all members suffer together.” Why, I ask, shouldn’t I, a Christian, suffer along with a Christian person and (as I truly confess) a faithful Catholic? Why, I ask, shouldn’t I lament the force shamefully afflicting him whose teaching and law and rules everyone commends, whose alms and protections the entire church of the saints and the paupers of Christ proclaims? Meanwhile as you daily wavered, I myself was pouring out most intimate prayers to the Lord, and indeed especially at the moment when we sacrifice the Son of the Father, asking that he would see fit to restore you to his paupers and downtrodden. How many times? The Lord, who was with you in your tribulation and also freed you, heard the prayer of his paupers whom you are accustomed to comfort in a fatherly way, and he freed you from the hands of those seeking your soul, which you possess in at least in your patience with the virgin Lucia. “For in your patience,” says the Lord, “you shall possess your souls.” And this: “If they have persecuted me, they shall also persecute you.” And the widow Judith: “All the faithful who are pleasing to God were remained faithful through many tribulations.” “For all,” says the Apostle, “who wish to dutifully live in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution.” “The glory of the future life is prepared by the troubles of the present life.” “An adversity which poses an obstacle to good men is a test of virtue, not a sign of rejection,” as Tobit attests who says: “Everyone who reveres you holds this for certain: that his life will be crowned if it was under trial. But if it was in tribulation, it will be freed.” “The Lord is close,” says the Prophet, “to those who are troubled at heart, and he will save the humble in spirit.” Moreover, “the evils which the faithful endure from enemies surely benefit them either for the washing of sins or for the cultivation and testing of justice,” as Augustine attests, “or for the demonstration of the misery of this life.” Surely “the iron of our mind cannot penetrate to the point of truth unless by this it destroys the filthiness of another perversity.” “For he whom the malice of Cain does not exercise refuses to be Abel.” Therefore, why, my Cornelius? Let us say with Jerome, the glorious confessor of Christ: “Let plagues come, let all kinds of evils come, but let Christ come to us after the plagues.” Among Christians certainly he who endures an insult is not the wretch, but rather he who does the injury.

320 Therefore, patience removes every stain of sins from us, and we are usefully chastened for our  
 salvation when “we are corrected by the Lord, lest we be condemned with this world,” as Tobit  
 attests who says: “Blessed be your name, who although you were angry, were merciful and in the  
 time of tribulation you forgave those who cried out to you.” And Isaiah: “The Lord will crown  
 you with tribulation.” “It is proper that we enter the kingdom of heaven through many  
 325 tribulations.” Indeed, “if it cannot be denied,” as Lactantius attests, “that patience is the highest  
 virtue, which the public voices of the people and the philosophers and orators all extoll with the  
 greatest praises, it is necessary that a just and wise man be in the power of an unjust person so  
 that patience may be attained.” What else? “The core of all philosophy, if we believe Plato, is  
 patience.” And Socrates says: “It is of a just man to know, to suffer and to do injury to no one.”  
 330 “Victory without an adversary is modest praise.” “He conquers twice who conquers himself.”  
 “Patience is a noble kind of winning. He who endures, wins.” Therefore, may you strive to  
 endure cruelties. “Indeed, virtue is great, if you do not hurt him by whom you have been hurt.  
 Glory is great if you spare him whom you could harm.” “Nothing can be stronger and nothing  
 more excellent,” according to Casiodorus, “than to hear insults and not respond in turn.”  
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Chapter 8: Not only do the examples of the selected people,  
 but amazingly even the properties of natural things urge us to patience.

340 But now, with the examples of Job and Tobit and the faithful of Christ set aside for the moment,  
 considering the secrets of nature on account of similarities, we find many natural things which  
 urge us to patience in a wonderful way. An amethyst, according to Pliny, renders fire-proof a  
 garment once it touches it. We compare patience to this gem not at all absurdly, since patient  
 men are can withstand any fire of tribulation. Because, according to Seneca, “patience is the  
 345 remedy of any sorrow,” he who has the perfect virtue of patience will not suffer from inflicted  
 sorrows. And we have the most confirmed in the Roman princes how much patience they had  
 with their army in adversities, and how patiently they sustained blows and death for the republic.  
 But also in the sealion we find the virtue of patience. For according to Pliny, it has two little  
 wings; if you place the right one under your head, you sleep so deeply that you do not even feel  
 350 the cuts of the body. So too does a patient man, to whom “these things are known that are on  
 high where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God,” become insensible to every evil by divine  
 love, or surely he reflects briefly on those things that he is enduring and feels the tribulations of  
 the world hardly at all. For “contemplation of the reward diminished the sting of the scourge.”  
 And “therefore perhaps the Lord punishes us here temporally so that the temporal pain may  
 355 redeem the flame of eternal death,” and “so that the shock may give us understanding. For the  
 grain is threshed so it can be stored in the granary, the stone is squared so it may be gathered in  
 the building of the temple without the sound of the hammer, a violent commotion was stirred up  
 when Elias was taken into heaven.” And what else? “It is the greatest remedy of the inner man, if  
 the exterior is patiently threshed on the threshing floor of this life with various flails of  
 360 tribulations.” “For every affliction of the heart or body without the seasoning of patience is  
 without merit and the fruit of salvation.” “Few” and very small are all the things that “we must  
 endure here, if we remember what he who summons us to heaven drank at the pillory.” But now



let us see something else by which we may be urged to patience in the example of the Memphis stone. This stone (the name obtained from the place where it is abundantly found) possesses  
 365 nothing less than the property that, if you cover it with vinegar and apply it to the members, they will then be rendered numb so that they do not feel the pains to come when they are amputated. Now I come to the metaphor of this matter. The Memphis stone, therefore, which is interpreted as ‘the bone of sorrow’, signifies death itself which without a doubt consumes all things with a will. Therefore, those who remember that they will themselves be dead, and anoint the mind  
 370 with vinegar, that is with the bitter taste of hellish pains, these ones indeed are so solidified in the Lord by the virtue of patience and repose in death that they either care very little or barely feel at all all the cuttings, plagues and sorrows of tribulations. With these two still not expected, namely the consideration of death and infernal torments and the desire of eternal things and hope of joys, how they especially lead to every act of patience to be undertaken, as Paul attests who says:  
 375 “Through patience,” he says, “let us run the course set out for us, looking to the author and perfecter of faith, Jesus, who endured the cross with the joy that was set out for him with contempt for the shame; and he sits at the right hand of God.” Therefore, let us consider, my Cornelius, our Lord Jesus Christ, “who has endured such opposition from sinners” in insulting words and torments; and “we shall not be exhausted, failing in our souls.” If menacing waves of  
 380 the open sea seem light and tolerable to sailors because of the hope of future wages, if hailstorms and winters to farmers, if wounds and blows to soldiers, as Chrysostom says, if very serious blows and diseases to fighters, how much more should we, for whom heaven has been prepared as a reward, feel nothing from the present harshnesses of the world, since to come in the blessed end will very greatly soften our labors. We will not consider that the way is difficult, but to  
 385 where it leads, nor will we consider another way because it is easy, but to where it leads. But why is it thus for us? Fighting against sin we have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.” Yet I have always had compassion for you (indeed the graces helping me), recalling that injury which you undeservedly suffered, much less the dishonour. For I with a heavy mouth for the time, in other words with silence and with intimacy to the man, but you indeed have been  
 390 mistreated (as it is said) even for a pittance. But why? “Fortune steals nothing” from a wise and patient man, “except what it gives. It does not give virtue,” therefore it does not withdraw it from him. “And so a wise” and also patient “man loses nothing.” His whole mind is focused “on the possession of one virtue “from which it can never be deprived.”

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Chapter 9: How greatly the penance imposed by the Lord upon our father Adam and the calamitous misery of many whom we know here strengthen us for patience.

But so that we may better understand how necessary and useful patience is to us, let us consider  
 400 the sentence of our God by which at the beginning of the world and the human race our father Adam, a transgressor of divine law, was punished. It remains for us who are born to this to know what patience should be for us here, so that we may labour in this world with pressures and tribulations. “Because you have listened to” (says the Lord to Adam) “the voice of your wife” more than mine, “and you have eaten from the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat, cursed  
 405 is the earth in your work. In labour, sadness and groaning may you shall eat from it for all the days of your life. It will sprout thorns and thistles for you, and you shall consume the herbs of the earth and the grass of the field. In the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread, until you return to the earth from which you came; because you are dust, you shall also turn again into

dust.” Behold how strongly the penance imposed on our father Adam by God strengthens also us  
410 to patience: we are all subject to the chains of this sentence, until with death fulfilled receding  
from this world we return to ashes. Therefore, it is necessary that we be in sadness and  
continuous groaning for all of the days of our life, and that we eat our bread not without sweat  
and labour. And what can be more true than the word of truth? Behold a baby: when it is born  
and first received as a stranger to this world, it starts with tears, as a wise man says. And  
415 although at that point it is ignorant and unknowing of all things that go on in the world, yet it  
knows nothing at the very moment of its birth other than to cry and weep. Why indeed? Certainly  
by a natural foresight and also lament the uninitiated protests the anxieties, tumults and labours  
of this life immediately at the very moment of its birth with tears and groaning. “As long as it  
lives, it is worked hard and oppressed,” says Cyprian. And what better relieves the necessity for  
420 those labouring and sweating according to the penance imposed upon our father Adam than the  
solace of patience, and then to take refuge with him “who consoles us in our every tribulation”  
appropriate to the penance which he has justly inflicted upon us, if we indeed endure it patiently?  
The Psalmist says: “You have shown me so many tribulations and evils and on the other hand  
you have consoled me and restored me.” No one can go to an island of the sea unless he has first  
425 crossed the sea. So too we ourselves will not enter paradise unless first we cross the sea of  
tribulation while we are living. It is impossible, Isidore says, for a person to not feel tribulations  
here and also reach the joys of heaven. Another thing besides this which strengthens us towards  
patience is the calamitous misery of those (whom we know either by writing or by living  
together) who are made beggars (Iruses) from rich men (Croesuses) and who who are changed  
430 from masters to servants; from rich men, I say, to humble ones, and from commanders to  
obeyers. Let us consider, most excellent Cornelius, all those formerly in our situation who have  
been swallowed by the flowing river, driven from their homeland by a hostile fury, and  
consumed by fire and iron; who have been destroyed by hasty anger, bitten by popular envy, and  
stained by infamy; who have been shamed by the immodesty of daughters and wives, who have  
435 even been assiduously tormented by the impudence and disrespect of rebellious sons. Behold  
these examples and a thousand other similar misfortunes of this life of ours (by which, as I surely  
confess, we are surrounded just as by inescapable and twisting labyrinths); if we consider them  
from the spirit, we will surely be greatly enriched by the growth of noble patience. Let us briefly  
recall to memory also those whom the Lord God, Father of all, has struck with various calamities  
440 from this storm of ours, and without a doubt we will sadly find very many, with whom none of  
us wishes to trade his fate. But let us briefly rehearse the tempests, dangers and disturbances of  
our world so that we may realize that what we are enduring here is nothing in comparison to  
those. Therefore, in the lamentable destruction of the city of Rhodes, by which the Turkish force  
was equal almost to the sky, who, I ask, will tell us how much suffering of human slaughter there  
445 is, how many showers of tears flowed, how many wails heard far away, how many laments  
reached all the way to heaven? And who does not grieve whenever he recalls what was done  
long ago in Artois and in other places nearby, namely the prophaned temples of God, the relics  
of saints held in contempt, the sacred vessels divided among soldiers, the virgins deflowered, and  
the fires and rapes committed daily? These and events similar to these, if we recall them to mind,  
450 are useful to our ailing spirits, not that another’s trouble should be pleasing to us, but by that  
intention alone, that when the things that we endure are seen to be small in comparison to theirs,  
we may spend this present life with less bitterness.<sup>3</sup>

455 Chapter 10: Our enemies and persecutors are advantageous to us because when they oppress us,  
they make a crown for us, and the more they press us, the more firmly they consolidate us in  
virtues, and all the things we endure are to be attributed to our sins.

Because, as the Apostle attests, the miseries, calamities and “sufferings of this time are not  
460 comparable to the future glory which will be revealed to us,” and if we are the companions of  
tribulations we will be with Christ and in glory, nothing, in my judgment, equally profits our  
salvation as adversity tolerated with a calm spirit. For this reason (as I truly confess) we should  
be more thankful to God who visits us here in a fatherly way with anxieties and evils that are  
brief and soon to vanish so that we may possess eternal joy with Him. But why? The seed  
465 entrusted to the viscera of the earth can never bring forth fruit from itself unless it first endures  
the bitter cold of winter. Nor is lumber joined together for buildings unless it first undergoes  
carvings and brandings. Therefore, not a single one of us will truly be able to produce the fruit of  
good works in the present life, or be duly installed in the edifice of paradise in the future, unless  
he has first endured many little afflictions. Since they are such, all of our adversaries and  
470 persecutors now become not enemies, but rather bees to us. For although they sting with a light  
little touch of pain for the moment, yet they make honey for us for the sweetness of eternal life.  
Moreover, to us they are like artisans: when they strike, they construct a perpetual crown for us.  
The more the anvil is struck by the hammer, the more fully it is consolidated. The fire is not  
extinguished by the wind, but is more strongly imflammed by it. And “what then will deprive us  
475 of the love of Christ? Tribulation or distress or hunger or nakedness or danger or persecution or  
the sword?” Also steel tempered by flames is rendered even harder. Gold placed in the fire does  
not lose value, but becomes even more beautiful. And if anyone has an admixture of impurity, the  
burning of the fire extracts the slag from it, but it doesn’t at all corrupt its substance. So too is the  
virtue of patience (as I may briefly hasten) dislodged by no adversities, but it is always rendered  
480 stronger by them. “In all things,” says Paul, “we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed; we  
suffer persecution, but we are not abandoned; we are humiliated, but we are not confounded; we  
are cast down, but we do not perish. Always bearing the mortification of Jesus Christ in our body  
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh.” Furthermore, patient man,  
the good aroma of Christ is produced everywhere, just like the aromatic spices which without a  
485 doubt convey a greater fragrance to the noses of humans, the thinner one’s hair becomes.  
Therefore, sweetest Cornelius, if we consider the deeds and patience of the preceding fathers, the  
burdens which we currently endure were the least of them all. “For that which in the present,”  
according to Paul, “is the temporary burden of our light tribulation is the burden of glory  
preparing for us an eternal sublimnity beyond all measure.” “Who among the saints,” I ask, “was  
490 crowned without patience? From the infancy of the church there was no lack of oppressive  
iniquity and patient justice.” And so if anything adverse should happen to us, let each of us say  
with the brothers of Joseph: “We suffer these things justly because we have sinned.” And this of  
Micah: “I will bear the wrath of God because I have sinned against him until he hears my case  
and issues my sentence. He will lead me into the light and I will see his justice.” We rejoice in  
495 this completed task in you, most famous man, who like another Hercules have wrestled most  
constantly with Antaeus, and have defeated him, saying to Him who made you triumph: “Not to  
us, Lord, not to us, but give the glory to your name.” Therefore, because nothing in our acts can  
help us complete the praise of other virtues except that which will accept the substance of  
patience, let us rather press on and watchfully labour so that, steadfast in every suffering, we  
500 may more closely observe the precepts of our Lord so that when the day of wrath and judgment

arrives, we will not be punished with the impious and the sinners, but rather we may be crowned in heaven with the just and those who fear God. Through Him who says: “in your patience you will possess your souls.” Amen.

505 Thus concludes the treatise on patience.

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<sup>1</sup> Added above line, “that is, because”

<sup>2</sup> In margin: “He is innocent, or rather he is just by innocence. He...was counted by justice among the criminal thieves. To the cross etc.”

<sup>3</sup> In margin: “Let us be mindful of the words of the Apostle Peter in the canons with which he consoled the brothers obsessed with the fury of storms, saying: ‘Do not tremble or flee into exile, dearest ones, in the passion which is made as a temptation for you as if something new is happening to you. But participating in Christ’s sufferings, rejoice that in the revelation of his glory’ when every garment is removed ‘you will rejoice, exalting’ equally in both spirit and body. First Peter chapter 4.”