Longsuffering

Let us try to study the Fruit of the Spirit together, which, as we mentioned before, is made up of nine aspects or qualities. Imagine we are in eighth grade and have nine textbooks to study. It is essential to know the name of each textbook, of each subject. It would be a problem if, as eighth graders, we did not know what subjects we were studying, wouldn't it? What would it mean if an eighth grader did not know what subjects he had at school? Would it point to a lack of interest in his education? Is it serious if you don't know that you have classes in English, mathematics, geography, history, chemistry, physics and other subjects?

In the same way, in the life of faith it is important to take stock of what we know about the nine aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit. Some of us may find that we don't know them, or know them only vaguely. If we struggle to remember them, that shows how much interest we have in the final fruit of the Spirit's work with us. It is vital that we know them, isn't it?

It is not enough just to know their names; you must also know and understand the content of each subject. And then we need to truly learn from them. We will study one of these nine subjects together, and, with the Lord's help, we will try to take each of them in turn, step by step.

Let us think about why we turn to God and how we use our time. Think of a pupil who has no interest in a subject: what results will he get? We know the answer: he will be held back a year, and if he keeps being held back, in the end he might even be expelled.

It is the same with us. We have a life of discipleship; we have entered school with the Lord Jesus in order to reach perfection. The perfect disciple must become like his teacher, and studying the Word of God is essential in this process.

One subject is "longsuffering." In how many places does the Bible speak about longsuffering? What does the Lord Jesus teach about longsuffering? How did the Lord Jesus practise longsuffering? These questions are very important, because He is our Teacher in the school of disciples.

We don't only learn; we also practise, watching how our Teacher practises and trying to align ourselves with His example. Let us look in the Word of God for passages about patience and what the Lord Jesus teaches us about it. Then let us explore what pattern the Lord Jesus gives us for cultivating longsuffering and how we must put these teachings into practice.

It is essential that we understand the importance of the school of Christ and study every aspect of it in order to become like our Teacher. The Lord Jesus is the image of God, and if we want to understand what God is like, especially when it comes to longsuffering, we must begin by getting to know what our Teacher is like.

We will open the book of Exodus to read about God's character and see whether He is a patient God. In Exodus 34, God reveals Himself to Moses and shows him the beauty of His character. We read from verse 5: "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Amen.

Although not all of God's attributes are listed here, those that are mentioned show us that He is merciful and slow to anger, which gives us an understanding of longsuffering. As we reflect on longsuffering, we notice that it is a virtue repeated three times to underline its importance.

God is slow to anger, which means He does not become angry quickly. This raises a question: can someone who gets angry quickly be called patient? Obviously not. The person who flares up quickly is no example of patience.

We turn to God out of this world full of sin, where the very idea of patience is often neglected. People are not taught to be longsuffering, because it is a characteristic of the Kingdom of God.

It is a quality that the citizens of Heaven possess, and the Lord came to bring it to us as well, to teach us, so that by going through His school we too may come to be longsuffering.

Let us stop and reflect on this. We will read from Psalm 145 to understand better what God is like. It agrees with what we read in Exodus 34. Psalm 145:7–9: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." Amen.

The Lord is described as gracious, full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. If we remember the fruit of the Spirit, which includes nine manifestations or characteristics, among them goodness and longsuffering, we understand that God is longsuffering and wants to bring us to this stature too.

Let us turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus to see whether He was longsuffering, looking for examples in the Word of God. Let us fix our attention, as Scripture urges us, on the author and finisher of our faith. As we look at His longsuffering, we should long to be like Him and then follow the teaching that leads us there.

Let us read from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26. Before we read, let us think about what it means to bear things, to be patient. We will notice that everyday life is full of situations that test our patience.

There are minor challenges where people lose their patience, but also major ones that test us just as much. A smaller example, which we have probably all lived through, can help us grasp the idea. In everyday life we often face situations that test our patience.

For example, when we are driving and find ourselves behind someone who hesitates to pull into an intersection, it can frustrate us. We notice that many drivers immediately react with impatience and honk at the person in front, especially if they see it is a woman or someone from out of town. In such moments our patience is put to the test, even in situations we consider minor.

But there are also bigger challenges, where patience is tested even more. The Lord Jesus showed us patience in situations of the greatest importance. It is easy to understand that He was patient with people in general, but He also showed patience when His own life was in danger.

Let us turn to the passage in Matthew 26, beginning at verse 47, and imagine how we would behave in a similar situation. How would we react if we were threatened? Would our reaction be like the Lord Jesus' or different? We are in His school and must aspire to be like Him, for this is what we have been called to.

We read from verse 47: "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people." Imagine it happening to us, being faced with an armed crowd. "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast." Let us think how we would feel in the Lord Jesus' place, betrayed and threatened with the loss of our life.

"And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Let us reflect on this event and ask ourselves whether we could react with the same calm and patience. The Lord Jesus knew Judas's intentions, and yet He met him calmly.

"Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear." These events show us how the Lord Jesus' patience and calm were exemplary even in the face of betrayal and an imminent threat to His life.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." This verse shows us that the Lord Jesus was longsuffering with Peter, even while facing Judas's betrayal and those who came with clubs to arrest Him.

In verse 53 the Lord Jesus goes on: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Here the Lord Jesus makes it plain that, although He had the power to ask for divine protection, He chose not to.

In 1 Peter we are given a deeper view of the patience of Christ, which is not a limited human patience but a divine one. Our goal as followers of Christ is not simply to have better patience than the people of the world, but to reach the level of the Lord Jesus' patience, which is perfection, the measure of the stature of Christ. Otherwise our religious practice stays shallow and lacks the true light of faith, merely waiting on God's mercy for the forgiveness of sins.

In 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 18 to 23, we are told: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Here the apostle Peter urges us to bear injustice patiently, even when we are doing good, because this pleases God, since this is how we grow to become like Him.

He reminds us that Christ suffered for us and left us an example: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." These verses urge us to follow Christ's example in patience and in suffering unjustly, as part of our heavenly calling.

If we suffer patiently when we do good, this pleases God. Pleasing God does not mean He wants us to suffer, but that He values the fruit of the Spirit produced in us through suffering. God's purpose is not for us to be slapped and beaten, but for us to go through the school of patience in order to reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

This life is passing, and we must not waste it. In hard times, suffering must be borne patiently, because in the Kingdom of God all the citizens are longsuffering and live in peace and rest. The Lord Jesus has called us to suffer patiently, just as He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. We are in His school and must follow Him.

In 1 John 2 we are told that whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk as the Lord Jesus walked. When He was mocked, He did not mock back, and when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to the righteous Judge. The Lord Jesus had supreme longsuffering, and this is what we are called to as well.

Now let us return to the teachings of the Lord Jesus to see whether He teaches us to endure. In Matthew 10:16–22 we are told: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues."

Let's pause here a moment. The Lord Jesus was like a lamb led to the slaughter. He tells us that He sends us out like sheep among wolves. He doesn't send us with any other status. A sheep's lot is to be eaten by the wolf, not to eat the wolf. Let's pay close attention. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." They will deliver us up to the councils, they will scourge us in their synagogues, not the other way round. We will not haul anyone into court or beat anyone. They will be the ones doing that.

"And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Amen.

When they deliver you up, do not worry. Was the Lord Jesus delivered up into their hands? He was. Did the Lord Jesus worry? No. Who did worry? Who drew the sword? Angry men. Shortly before, the disciples had been angry with the two brothers who asked that one might sit at His

right hand and the other at His left.

"And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Amen. There is no hint of opposition here, no resistance of any kind; this is a teaching that calls us to non-resistance.

We will be the ones who pay the price of the heavenly calling because of the Lord Jesus. "Ye shall be brought," it says here; "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." How long must we endure? "He that endureth to the end." If we do not endure to the end, it means we stop short in our patience and start resisting.

The Lord gives us an instruction here in verse 23: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." This statement makes us ask whether, when we are persecuted, we ought to rebel, go on strike or protest. But instead of urging us to do such things, Scripture tells us: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." So the Lord Jesus allows us to avoid persecution by fleeing, not by protesting.

Further on, in verses 24 and 25, we are reminded that "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." These words urge us to take our place as disciples and follow the Lord Jesus' example, even in the face of persecution, so that we may become like Him.

In Luke chapter 21 we are told about the importance of patience, with the emphasis that whoever endures to the end will be saved, as it is written in verse 19: "In your patience possess ye your souls."

From verse 12 onward we are shown a series of trials believers will go through, including persecution and being brought before the authorities. These are moments that will serve as a testimony, and so we are advised not to worry beforehand about how to answer, because we will be given the wisdom we need to face the opposition.

In conclusion, the message is clear: instead of rebelling or protesting, we are called to endure and keep our faith, following the Lord Jesus' example and trusting in the protection and wisdom God will give us in times of trial.

Verse 19 interests me in particular: "In your patience possess ye your souls." If we do not endure, we do not win our souls. We often hear people say, "I just couldn't bear it." "It was too much for me, I couldn't take it." Or, "I put up with it and put up with it, and at some point I just couldn't anymore." In those situations, according to Scripture, we do not win our souls. This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Why is longsuffering necessary? Let us turn to Colossians, where we find an exhortation for all of us. Longsuffering is a characteristic of God, a trait of the Lord Jesus and of all who dwell in the Kingdom, and we too must take it on. It is a character trait essential to winning our souls. To

win means not to lose.

In Colossians chapter 3 we are urged to learn valuable lessons so that we may know the Lord Jesus and reach His stature. Verse 10 speaks of putting off the old man and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.

Verse 12 gives us this exhortation: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." We must put on longsuffering, forbear one another and, if we have a quarrel against one another, forgive one another. "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Amen.

Without longsuffering we cannot bear with one another; we complain and cannot forgive. So we are urged to put on longsuffering and, alongside it, to cultivate other virtues such as kindness, gentleness, love and peace, which are part of the fruit of the Spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 4 we find another exhortation about longsuffering. Paul urges the church at Ephesus, just as he did the church at Colossae, to take on this virtue, in verses 1, 2 and 3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Amen.

If we look closely, we see that we are urged to conduct ourselves in a way worthy of the calling we have received, with humility, meekness and longsuffering. This attitude is not merely optional; it is essential and necessary, because it is the fruit of the Spirit.

Now let us turn our attention to the epistle of James, chapter 1, where the apostle James explains why patience matters. In verses 2, 3 and 4 of chapter 1 we are told: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." This advice reminds us of tests at school, which we didn't like, often because we weren't prepared. In the school of Christ, by contrast, we are urged to be prepared.

The apostle James urges us to see trials as an occasion for joy, because they are tests of our discipleship, in which God tests what we have learned in order to help us grow. He continues: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Trials, which in other places may be called tribulations, are part of the process by which we enter the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 10 and Luke 21 we are told that we will be like sheep among wolves, that we will be persecuted and will face tribulations. It is these tribulations that develop longsuffering in us. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Amen. This is the school of Christ, in which we absolutely must be enrolled and through which we must pass various trials, because these trials produce patience.

Patience must have its perfect work, so that we may be perfect, or, I could say, longsuffering. In this way we will lack nothing, or, we might think of it this way, we will be like the Lord Jesus, perfect as He was. The Lord Jesus was made perfect through suffering, as the Word of God tells us in Hebrews chapters 2 and 5. We too must go through the same school; we read in 1 Peter

chapter 2 that this is what we were called to as well, to follow in His steps.

The apostle Paul also tells us in Romans chapter 5 about patience and how important it is. There are many passages and teachings about patience, about longsuffering; it is essential that we take them in and know them. Each of us must know these things, because we have to work with them and be strengthened. When tribulations come, we need to know why they come, because we must remain sound in patience and overcome to the end.

In Romans chapter 5 I will read from verse 1. Many people read only verses 1 and 2 and look no further, but these verses belong together. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Some stop here and rejoice that we are justified and have peace. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Paraphrasing a little, we could read it this way: it is to Him that we owe the fact that by faith we have entered the school, this state of grace, in order to arrive at longsuffering, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit works with those of us who live by the Spirit's promptings, and walking after the things of the Spirit, which include longsuffering, is life and peace, or rest. And then he tells us, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

The apostle Paul teaches us that the tribulations we face are really trials we must pass through, saying that patience brings experience, victory in the trial. Although he could have used the word "tribulation," he chose to speak of being proved, showing that we are tested through the hardships we meet. The victory gained through patience brings us hope, and this hope "maketh not ashamed," because it is the result of the school of patience we are going through.

Then he writes, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This pouring out is not a mechanical act but an active one, in which the Holy Spirit works in us, urges us on and leads us through trials. When we are longsuffering with someone, we show that we love them, as the Lord Jesus did on the cross. He was longsuffering with those who crucified Him and mocked Him, praying for their forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This example of love and patience is what we too are called to aspire to.

We must deepen our learning in the school of Christ, aiming not just for a passing grade but for excellence. In 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 5, we are urged: "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." This is so that we may grow in likeness to the Lord Jesus and fulfil our heavenly calling.

A few years ago, when I read this passage, I liked it very much, and I pictured it as a spiritual school with seven grades. In this school, first grade is faith. Second grade is faith combined with virtue, and third grade is faith together with virtue and knowledge. Just as in an ordinary school, where we first learn arithmetic and our ABCs, then come back to arithmetic, to reading or grammar, and so on, in this spiritual school we must join temperance to patience.

It is a process we go through, and in 2 Peter 1:8 we are told: "For if these things be in you, and abound" — patience included — "they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We must come to the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus, not just knowing about Him, but knowing Him in union with Him, being one with the Lord Jesus as He is. Let us ask ourselves: was the Lord Jesus godly? Was He longsuffering? Was He self-controlled? Did He join faith with deeds? The answer to all these questions is yes. That is how we arrive at full knowledge, which means complete knowledge.

This is life eternal: that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent — not just knowing about God, but being like Him.

Further on we are told, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

That is, someone has entered the school but has not devoted himself to learning and practice; he has no interest in reaching longsuffering and does not work towards it, and clearly he is blind and has forgotten that he was cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus. Some are content merely with being cleansed from sin by the blood of the Lord Jesus and go no further.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." We are called to longsuffering, to have the fruit of the Spirit, to be like the Lord Jesus, to make our calling and election sure. So if we follow this path, "ye shall never fall," and "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Do we have assurance of salvation? Yes, we have that assurance. "So an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the Kingdom of God," or we will be counted worthy. The Word of God says that His wife hath made herself ready, and so "an entrance is ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus." If we do not do these things, we are blind, we cannot see, and we forget that we were cleansed from our sins.

What will happen to us if we are blind and cannot see? In Revelation the Lord Jesus speaks to those who are blind. In Revelation chapter 3, from the second part of verse 14, it says: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Amen.

Some people boast, "I'm spiritually rich, I lack nothing. I'm with the Lord. I'm under grace." In other words, lukewarm. What do suffering and persecution mean to someone who is lukewarm? How many people today fail to understand the Lord's teaching that leads to longsuffering? They say, "How can you not resist when someone does you harm?"

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." It is a serious thing to be blind.

We close with the Lord Jesus' teachings on how to arrive at longsuffering. We will turn to Matthew chapter 5, where we find some of the Lord Jesus' teachings. We read them to understand how we can come to longsuffering, which is really rest for the soul. "Come... and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls," the Lord Jesus tells us. Let us learn from Him the longsuffering that brings us to rest, brings us to peace, gives us peace. These things are hard to accept, hard to receive, but they alone lead us to longsuffering, and so to rest for the soul.

There is no other subject, there are no other teachings. If we skip them, if we do not accept them, we will not arrive at the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of our Teacher, who teaches us and guides us so that we come to longsuffering. We read from verse 38: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." I think you'll agree with me that there is no longsuffering here. He hurt me, so I hurt him. You don't need longsuffering for that. Longsuffering comes when you have hurt me and I do not hurt you back. That is where we find longsuffering.

And now the Lord Jesus teaches us how we can come to longsuffering. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil." The neighbour, the doctor, parliament, the government, the stranger, the brother in church, the wife, the husband, the children and so on. Let us pay close attention to the Lord's teaching. "That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Amen.

The Lord Jesus does not allow us even the slightest resistance. Someone might say, "Even if my father hands me over to death, even if my mother, my sister, my wife or my child hands me over to death? They are my family, they've told me so many times that they love me and have shown it too, so it's very hard for me to bear their betrayal and not resist. My family matters to me." I understand that the situation would seem different, somehow easier, if it were a neighbour who has no reason to love me.

And yet the Lord Jesus taught us, as we read in Matthew 10 and Luke 21: "Ye shall be betrayed... by your own household, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." And what does He teach us? He teaches us not to resist. He tells us not even to think about what we will say, because the Holy Spirit will inspire us in that moment.

This may be a hard lesson. Even so, the Lord Jesus will not give us a trial or a hardship greater than we can bear. That is His promise, and we must keep it in our hearts. He knows when the time is right, when we are ready, and then He will send us the trial.

He will not do it before we are ready. Just as you would not give a first grader a fourth-grade exam, or ask him to carry a sack of cement, because he couldn't do it. If we humans don't do such things, how much less will God.

There are other teachings too, such as "judge not, condemn not," and many more. If we follow them completely, that is, one hundred percent, they will lead us to longsuffering and to perfection. Otherwise our patience will not be like the Lord Jesus' patience. It is not enough to say, "I put up with it as long as I could." We must endure to the very end. By our patience we will win our souls, as we are told.

If we face a trial and fall, that does not mean God gave us a trial beyond our strength. Perhaps we did not act as we should have, or perhaps it was not even a trial sent by God at all.

I will read two more verses from 1 Corinthians. We have a promise from God, and we know that God is faithful. If He is faithful, that means He keeps His Word and does not break it. Verse 13 of chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians teaches us to keep in mind that we are in the school of Christ. He brings us up by the Holy Spirit and does not give us a trial, or a temptation — here it says temptation — beyond human strength. Verse 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Amen.

There will never be a trial greater than our spiritual strength. If we are in first grade, the trial or test is a first-grade one. But we can have an evil heart of unbelief, and then God is not to blame. Let us remember: in the school of Christ we are protected by God; no trials come that are beyond our strength, and the promise the Lord Jesus made in John 10:28 is: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Only an evil heart of unbelief can separate us from God.

But we must go through this school of patience that we are beginning. And we must graduate from it and reach our perfection. Let us also read from 1 Peter chapter 5; I'll read from verse 7 to 11. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." All of it! He cares for us. Is that a promise? What can man do to us? When God is with us, can anyone do anything to us? Yes, man can destroy this body of ours, but only when we have the strength we need for it.

Let us remember Peter and John, who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. That shame meant a beating, and they rejoiced. Some do not have that strength; if they don't, it's because they are still little ones in the school of Christ, and they will grow until they too have the strength they need. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the

world."

So we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness, and so on. It is a war. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

God has a purpose in everything He does, including our sufferings. They are temporary, and their end is our strengthening and perfecting. In Hebrews 12 we find further references to this school of patience.

Today we have learned about longsuffering, which we can think of as a subject of study, to help us understand why it is needed. So we must study the Word of God and observe how the Lord Jesus showed longsuffering, and how the disciples and the apostle Paul lived out this virtue. We remember Paul's words: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." We are called to follow this example.

May the Lord help you take to heart this beautiful subject, longsuffering, which brings rest to the soul and brings peace; and those who have gone through its school, who have suffered and accepted to endure, know for certain that rest was in their souls.

We are all called to learn, to practise and to become like the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Source: *Longsuffering* — Unmodified Word
unmodifiedword.com/written-sermons/longsuffering