

Speaking to the soul



Joy

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. Colossians 1:11 - 12

Life can be incredibly tough. Paul often spoke of the challenges he had faced which involved rejection, betrayal, shipwrecks, imprisonment, beatings and much more. He also knew that the Colossian church was going through a difficult time and needed huge strength to keep going in a godly way. They needed to know how to endure and be patient when they were under extreme pressure. Most people who face attack will fight back, but Paul knew that this was not what God wanted.

The word for patience used to be translated as 'longsuffering'. Being patient is tough enough, but to be longsuffering is beyond all of us. The only way we can keep on being patient is with God's help. He helps us to be kind towards people who are rude and obstructive. He shows us how to face rejection with love and understanding. He enables us to stand up to the foolishness of other people with grace. None of those responses come naturally to us. But as the Holy Spirit is allowed to take control of our lives, he enables us to endure with patience and to come through long periods of suffering with joy.

It's the word 'joy' that is particularly startling in this verse. Endurance and longsuffering patience don't sound joyful at all. They sound like very hard work. But whenever the Holy Spirit is at work, there is joy. Even in the face of brutal opposition, which has been the experience of many Christians over the years, there is a bubbling of holy joy.

I don't know what challenges you are facing at the moment, but I'm sure there are situations in which you need the strength to endure and be patient. All of us face such challenges, so we need to open ourselves afresh to God's Spirit and invite him to give us strength that is well beyond

our own. This is how we can be the gracious, resilient and patient people that he wants us to be. If you do that, I promise that you will experience God's joy.

QUESTION

In what situations are you needing the power to endure and be patient at present?

PRAYER

Lord God, I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Fill me afresh right now to enable me to face every situation with your strength and grace. Amen

Photograph - St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

