

## QUESTION 136

### Patience

Next we have to consider *patience (patientia)*. And on this topic there are five questions: (1) Is patience a virtue? (2) Is patience the greatest of the virtues? (3) Can patience be had without grace? (4) Is patience a part of fortitude? (5) Is patience the same as longanimity (*longanimitas*)?

### Article 1

#### Is patience a virtue?

It seems that patience (*patientia*) is not a virtue:

**Objection 1:** As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 14, the virtues exist most perfectly in heaven. But patience does not exist in heaven, since in heaven there are no evils to be endured—this according to Isaiah 49:10 and Apocalypse 7:16 (“They shall not hunger or thirst, nor shall the heat or the sun strike them”). Therefore, patience is not a virtue.

**Objection 2:** No virtue can be found in bad individuals, since virtue is that which makes the one who has it good. But patience is sometimes found in bad men, as is clear in the case of an avaricious individual who suffers evils patiently in order to accumulate money—this according to Ecclesiastes 5:16 (“All the days of his life he eats in darkness, and with many cares, and in misery and sorrow”). Therefore, patience is not a virtue.

**Objection 3:** As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 70, a. 1), the fruits [of the Holy Spirit] differ from the virtues. But as is clear from Galatians 5:22, patience is numbered among the fruits. Therefore, patience is not a virtue.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Patientia* Augustine says, “The virtue of the soul that is called patience is so great a gift of God that we even preach about the patience of Him who bestows it upon us.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 123, a. 12), the moral virtues are ordered toward the good insofar as they preserve the good of reason against the force of the passions. Now among the other passions, sadness (*tristitia*) is effective in impeding the good of reason—this according to 2 Corinthians 7:10 (“Worldly sadness leads to death”) and Ecclesiasticus 30:25 (“Sorrow has killed many, and there is no profit in it”). Hence, there has to be a virtue through which the good of reason is preserved against sadness, lest reason succumb to sadness. But this is what patience does. Hence, in *De Patientia* Augustine says, “A man’s patience is that by which we endure evils with a balanced mind”—i.e., without the disturbances of sadness— “lest we desert with an unbalanced mind those goods through which we will arrive at better goods.” Hence, it is clear that patience is a virtue.

**Reply to objection 1:** The moral virtues do not remain in heaven (*in patria*) with the same act that they have in this life (*in via*). More specifically, they do not remain with the same act in relation to those goods of the present life that will not remain in heaven; instead, they remain with the same act in relation to the *end*, which will exist in heaven. For instance, *justice* will not exist in heaven as regards acts of buying and selling and other things that belong to the present life; instead, it will exist in one’s *being subject to God*. Similarly, in heaven the act of patience will not consist in enduring certain things; instead, it will consist in *the enjoyment of the goods which we wanted to acquire by being patient*. Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine says, “In heaven what remains is not patience itself, which is necessary only where there are evils to be endured; instead, what is eternal is what one arrives at by means of patience.”

**Reply to objection 2:** As Augustine says in *De Patientia*, “Those who are properly called patient are the ones who would rather endure evils without committing them than commit evils without enduring them. On the other hand, in the case of those who endure evils in order to do evils, their patience is neither to be admired nor to be praised, since it is no patience at all, but an austerity to be marveled at,

even while patience is denied them.”

**Reply to objection 3:** As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 11, a. 1 and q. 70, a. 1), by its nature ‘fruit’ implies a certain sort of delight. But as *Ethics* 1 points out, “The operations of the virtues are delightful in themselves.” Now it is common for the name ‘virtues’ to signify the *acts* of the virtues as well. And so patience, as regards the *habit*, is posited as a *virtue* with respect to the delight that it has in its act, whereas it is posited as a *fruit* mainly because it is through patience that one’s mind is preserved from being overwhelmed by sadness.

## Article 2

### Is patience the most important of the virtues?

It seems that patience is the most important of the virtues:

**Objection 1:** In every genus what is perfect is the most important thing. But as James 1:4 says, “Patience has a perfect work.” Therefore, patience is the most important virtue.

**Objection 2:** All the virtues are ordered toward the good of the soul. But this good seems to belong especially to patience; for Luke 21:19 says, “In your patience you will possess your own souls.” Therefore, patience is the greatest of the virtues.

**Objection 3:** That which preserves and causes other things seems to be the more important. But as Gregory says in one of his homilies, “Patience is the root and guardian of all the virtues. Therefore, patience is the greatest of the virtues.

**But contrary to this:** Patience is not numbered among the four virtues that Gregory (*Moralia* 23) and Augustine (*De Moribus Ecclesiae*) call the *principal* virtues.

**I respond:** By their nature the virtues are ordered toward the good, since, as *Ethics* 2 says, a virtue “is that which makes the one having it good and renders his act good.” Hence, it must be the case that a virtue is more central and more important to the extent that it orders the individual toward the good to a greater degree and more directly.

Now the virtues that order a man more directly toward the good are those that are *constitutive of the good* rather than those that *impede what leads one away from the good*. And just as, among those virtues that are constitutive of the good, a virtue is more important to the extent that it establishes a man in a greater good—so that *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* are more important than *prudence* and *justice*—so, too, among those virtues that impede what leads one away from the good, a virtue is more important to the extent that what it impedes leads one away from the good to a greater degree. Now *the danger of death*, which *fortitude* has to do with, and *the pleasures of touch*, which *temperance* has to do with, draw one away from the good more than do the various adversities that *patience* deals with.

And so patience is not the most important virtue, but instead it lags behind not only the theological virtues and prudence and justice, which directly establish a man in the good, but also fortitude and temperance, which draw one back from major obstacles.

**Reply to objection 1:** Patience is said to have a perfect act in enduring adversities, which give rise in the first place to *sadness*, which patience moderates, and in the second place to *anger*, which *mildness* (*mansuetudo*) moderates, and in the third place to *hatred*, which *charity* removes, and in the fourth place to *unjust harm*, which *justice* prohibits. For it is more perfect to remove the first principle of each thing. And yet it does not follow that if patience is more perfect in this respect, then it is more perfect absolutely speaking.

**Reply to objection 2:** Possession implies a serene dominance. And so a man is said to ‘possess his own soul’ through patience insofar as patience roots out the passions which are associated with adversity and by which the soul is disquieted.

**Reply to objection 3:** Patience is called “the root and guardian of all the virtues” not in the sense that it directly causes and conserves the virtues, but only in the sense that it removes what poses obstacles to them.

### Article 3

#### Can patience be had without grace?

It seems that patience can be had without grace:

**Objection 1:** The more reason inclines toward something, the more the rational creature can accomplish that thing. Now it is more in keeping with reason for someone to suffer evils for the sake of what is good rather than to suffer evils for the sake of what is bad. But some individuals, by their own power and without the assistance of grace, suffer evils for the sake of what is bad; for in *De Patientia* Augustine says, “Men endure many toils and sorrows for the sake of things that they love sinfully.” Therefore, *a fortiori*, a man can endure evils for the sake of what is good—that is, a man can be truly patient—without the assistance of grace.

**Objection 2:** Some individuals who are not in the state of grace abhor the evils of the vices more than they abhor corporeal evils, and so we read that certain gentiles endured many evils in order not to betray their fatherland, or in order not to do something else unrighteous. But this is to be truly patient. Therefore, it seems that patience can be had without the assistance of grace.

**Objection 3:** It is manifestly obvious that some individuals suffer through grave and bitter evils in order to regain their bodily health. But the salvation of the soul is no less desirable than bodily health. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, someone is able, for the sake of saving his soul, to endure many evils—i.e., to be truly patient—without the assistance of grace.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 61:6 says, “My patience is from Him”—viz., from God.

**I respond:** As Augustine says in *De Patientia*, “The force of desire makes for the endurance of toils and pains, and no one willingly undertakes to bear what is painful except for the sake of what pleases him.” And the reason for this is that the mind abhors sadness and pain in their own right; hence, one never chooses to suffer what is painful for its own sake, but instead chooses to suffer it only for the sake of some end. Therefore, it must be the case that the good for the sake of which an individual wills to suffer evils is more willed and more loved than the good whose privation inflicts the pain that we bear patiently.

Now it pertains to charity, which loves God above all things, that someone should prefer the good of grace to all the natural goods whose loss can cause sorrow. Hence, it is clear that patience, insofar as it is a virtue, is caused by charity—this according to 1 Corinthians 13:4 (“Charity is patient ...”). But it is clear that charity cannot be had except through grace—this according to Romans 5:5 (“The charity of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us”). Hence, it is clear that patience cannot be had without the assistance of grace.

**Reply to objection 1:** If human nature were intact (*integra*), then reason’s inclination would prevail, but in corrupted nature (*in natura corrupta*) what prevails is the inclination of disordered sensual desire (*concupiscentia*), which dominates in a man. And a man is more prone to sustain the sort of evils in which disordered sensual desire delights in the present than to endure evils for the sake of the future goods that are desired in accord with reason. But it is the latter that belongs to true patience.

**Reply to objection 2:** The good of political virtue (*bonum politicae virtutis*) is commensurate with human nature. And so without the assistance of habitual grace (*absque auxilio gratiae gratum facientis*) the human will is capable of tending toward it—though not without God’s help. But the good of grace is supernatural. Hence, a man cannot tend toward it by the power of his own nature. And so the arguments

are not parallel.

**Reply to objection 3:** The endurance of evils that one sustains for the sake of bodily health proceeds from the love by which a man naturally loves his own flesh. And so the argument is not similar to the one about patience, which proceeds from supernatural love (*quae procedit ex amore supernaturali*).

#### Article 4

##### Is patience a part of fortitude?

It seems that patience is not a part of fortitude:

**Objection 1:** The same thing is not a part of itself. But patience seems to be the same as fortitude, since, as was explained above (q. 123, a. 6), the proper act of fortitude is to endure, and this seems to belong to patience as well; for in his *Book of Judgments* Prosper [of Aquitaine] says that patience consists in “enduring evils that are inflicted by others.” Therefore, patience is not a part of fortitude.

**Objection 2:** As was established above (q. 123, a. 3), fortitude has to do with instances of *fear* and *daring*, and so it exists in the irascible [part of the soul]. But patience seems to have to do with instances of *sadness*, and so it seems to exist in the concupiscible [part of the soul]. Therefore, *patience* is not a part of *fortitude* but is instead a part of *temperance*.

**Objection 3:** A whole cannot exist without its parts. Therefore, if patience were a part of fortitude, then fortitude would never exist without patience. And yet sometimes a courageous individual does not endure evils patiently, but instead even attacks the one who is inflicting the evils. Therefore, patience is not a part of fortitude.

**But contrary to this:** In *Rhetorica* Tully posits patience as a part of fortitude.

**I respond:** Patience is like a *potential* part, since it is adjoined to fortitude in the way that a *secondary* virtue is joined to a *principal* virtue. For as Gregory puts it in one of his homilies, it belongs to patience to “undergo to the full with equanimity the evils inflicted by others.”

Now among the evils that are inflicted by others, the main ones and the most difficult to endure are those which pertain to the danger of death and which fortitude has to do with. Hence, it is clear that in this subject matter fortitude holds the principal place in the sense of claiming for itself what is most important in this subject matter. And so patience is joined to it in the way that a secondary virtue is joined to a principal virtue.

**Reply to objection 1:** Fortitude involves enduring not just any sort of [evil], but that which is the most difficult to endure, viz., to endure the danger of death. But patience can involve enduring *any* sort of evil.

**Reply to objection 2:** The act of fortitude consists not only in someone’s persisting in the good against *fears* about future dangers, but also in his not falling short because of present *sadness* or *pain*—and in this last respect patience has an affinity with fortitude. And yet fortitude is mainly concerned with *fears*, whose nature involves running away—something that fortitude avoids. By contrast, patience is mainly concerned with *sadness*; for an individual is called patient not because he does not run away, but because he behaves in a praiseworthy manner in enduring what is harming him in the present—more specifically, by not being saddened by it in a disordered manner. And this is why fortitude properly exists in the irascible [part of the soul], whereas patience properly exists in the concupiscible [part of the soul].

Nor does this prevent patience from being a part of fortitude. For one virtue’s being adjoined to another virtue does not have to do with the *subject* that has the virtues, but instead has to do with their *matter* or their *form*. Again, it is not the case that patience is a part of temperance, even though they both

exist in the concupiscible [part of the soul]. For temperance has to do only with those instances of sadness that are opposed to the pleasures of touch, e.g., instances of sadness that arise from abstinence from food or from sexual intercourse, whereas patience has to do mainly with instances of sadness that are inflicted by others. Again, temperance involves curbing sadness of the sort in question, as well as contrary pleasures, whereas patience involves a man's not receding from the good of virtue because of sadness of the relevant sort, no matter how strong it might be.

**Reply to objection 3:** Patience can, with respect to something of itself, be posited as an *integral* part of fortitude—and it is this sort of part that the objection is talking about—viz., insofar as someone endures *with patience* evils that involve the danger of death. Nor is it contrary to the nature of patience that a individual, even while the act of patience exists, should attack the one who is doing evil things. For as Chrysostom says in commenting on Matthew 4:10 (“Get behind me, Satan ...”), “In the case of injuries against oneself it is praiseworthy to be patient, but it is exceedingly impious to endure with patience insults against God.” And in a certain letter *Contra Marcellinum* Augustine says that the precepts concerning patience are not contrary to the good of the republic, which is such that one fights against enemies for the sake of preserving it.

However, insofar as patience has to do with *any other sort of evil*, it is adjoined to fortitude as a secondary virtue is adjoined to a principal virtue.

## Article 5

### Is patience the same as longanimity?

It seems that patience is the same as longanimity (*longanimitas*):

**Objection 1:** In *De Patientia* Augustine says that God is called patient not in the sense that He undergoes something bad, but in the sense that “He waits for bad individuals to be converted.” Hence, Ecclesiasticus 5:4 says, “The Most High is a patient rewarder.” Therefore, it seems that patience is the same as longanimity.

**Objection 2:** It is not the case that the same thing is opposed to two things. But impatience is opposed to longanimity, by which one waits through a delay. For one is said to be impatient with a delay in the same way that he is impatient with other bad things. Therefore, it seems that patience is the same as longanimity.

**Objection 3:** Just as *time* is one of the circumstances of the evils that are endured, so, too, is *place*. But there is no virtue based on place that is distinct from patience. Therefore, it is likewise not the case that longanimity, which is based on time insofar as an individual [with longanimity] waits for a long time, is distinct from patience.

**But contrary to this:** A Gloss on Romans 2:4 (“Or do you disdain the riches of His goodness and patience and longanimity?”) says, “It seems that longanimity differs from patience in that those who are delinquent through weakness rather than purposefully are said to be endured *with longanimity*, whereas those who exult in their sins with an obstinate frame of mind are said to be endured *with patience*.”

**I respond:** Just as *magnanimity* is said to be that through which an individual has a spirit of tending toward great things, so, too, *longanimity* is said to be that through which an individual has a spirit of tending toward something that is a long way off. And so just as magnanimity has more to do with a hope that tends toward something good rather than with an audacity or fear or sadness that relates to something bad, so, too, with longanimity. Hence, longanimity seems to agree more with magnanimity than with patience.

Nevertheless, there are two ways in which longanimity can agree with patience:

First, because patience, like fortitude, *endures certain bad things for the sake of something good*.

Now if the good is expected in the short run, then it is easier to endure what is bad, whereas if the good is deferred for a long time and one has to endure evils in the present, then it is more difficult.

Second, because *the very fact that a hoped for good is deferred is apt to cause sadness*—this according to Proverbs 13:12 (“Hope that is deferred afflicts the soul”). Hence, there can be patience in enduring an affliction of this sort, just as in enduring any other sort of sadness.

So, then, to the extent that (a) the deferral of a hoped for good, which pertains to *longanimity*, and (b) the toil that a man endures in the continual execution of a good work, which pertains to *constancy*, can fall under the notion of an evil that engenders sadness, both longanimity and constancy are included under patience. Hence, in defining patience Tully says, “Patience is the voluntary and prolonged endurance of arduous and difficult things for the sake of righteousness and usefulness.” The fact that he says ‘arduous’ pertains to *constancy* in the good; the fact that he says ‘difficult’ pertains to the seriousness of the evil, which has to do with *patience* properly speaking; and the fact that he also adds ‘prolonged’ pertains to *longanimity* insofar as longanimity agrees with patience.

**Reply to objection 1 and objection 2:** From this the replies to the first and second objections are clear.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though what is far away in place is remote from us, it is nonetheless not removed *from reality* (*non est remotum a natura rerum*) like what is far away in time is. And so the arguments are not parallel.

Besides, what is far away in place does not pose a difficulty except by reason of time, since what is far away from us in place can make its way to us later in time.

**Reply to the argument for the contrary:** We concede the fourth argument. Yet one should consider the reason for the difference assigned by the Gloss. For in the case of those who sin out of weakness, the fact that they *persevere in evil for a long time* is the only thing that seems hard to bear (*importabile*), and this is why it is said that they are borne with *longanimity*. By contrast, *the very fact that an individual sins out of pride* seems hard to bear, and this is why those who sin out of pride are said to be endured with *patience*.