

"Continuing"

F. A. Hughes.

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The feature of continuing, of "going on," has a very great place in Scripture, and comes to us as an encouragement and also as a challenge. How often many of us have been inclined to "give up."

The Holy Spirit of God emphasizes the importance of the matter by His extensive use of the words "continual," "continuing," etc., in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Although not quite in line with the thought we have in mind in this short paper, it may be profitable to consider the oft-repeated reference to the "continual burnt offering." This expression occurs many times in the Old Testament, but it is found in the Book of Numbers more times than it is elsewhere. As we tread our way through this world, God would have us ever keep in our hearts and minds the preciousness of Christ as the One who was marked by unswerving devotion to the will of God, that of which the burnt offering so plainly speaks.

We are thankful that the ways and attributes of God Himself are marked by this feature of continuance. His Name is the "Same;" in Him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," (James 1: 17). His love continues; His mercy and loving kindness, His word, His faithfulness, all abide unchanging and unchangeable. In the greatness and majesty of His deity as the Son it is said of Christ, "Thou art the Same, and Thy years shall not fail;" and in the glory of His manhood He is "Jesus Christ the Same yesterday, and today, and for ever." What an encouragement to our hearts as we commence another year in these changing scenes of unreality and uncertainty!

In every dispensation there have been men and women marked by continuance. The Psalmist could speak of God's praise being "continually" in his mouth; Daniel is twice spoken of as serving his God "continually," and he "continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus," which was a very long time indeed. In the early days of Christianity we read of those who gave themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Again we read of the company in the upper room "These *all* continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," and this marked both men and women! We have the record, too, of that company of 3,000 newly converted souls who "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers." May we not thank God that such features and such persons have been preserved right down to our day? Throughout the chequered history of the Church, through all the persecutions of the "dark ages" and other times, in spite of all the corruption which has crept in, there have been these "continuing" ones. The saints of Hebrews 11 continued in the path of faith amidst all the persecution and suffering and loss which that pathway entailed; Anna in Luke was marked by the same precious feature, continuing in the interests of her God right on to old age. Happy indeed if we are marked by the same desire to "go on" in the things of God and of Christ.

Let us briefly remind ourselves of some of the things in which we, in our day, may continue. We have already referred to continuing in the "apostles' doctrine and fellowship." In days when the mind of man is intruding itself so blatantly into the things of God, how necessary such continuance becomes us, and how increasingly necessary it is for our affections to be strengthened by a continued sense of the love of Christ as He makes Himself known to us in the breaking of bread, and for our spirits to be subdued and our faith increased as we wait upon God in prayer.

In John 8 we are to continue in the Lord's word; in John 15 we are exhorted "continue ye in My

love;" in Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas exhorted the believers to "continue in the grace of God," and in the next chapter other believers were exhorted "to continue in the faith." Colossians 1 speaks also of continuing "in the faith grounded and settled . . . not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Paul, writing to Timothy, speaks of the practical salvation which follows continuance "in faith and charity (love) and holiness." He also refers to the salvation which would accrue to Timothy himself and to those who heard him as he continued in the doctrine he had received, and finally he charges him to continue in "the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of." What invaluable instruction to a young man in the faith! What priceless instruction today for both young and old!

Continuance in these things is no easy matter, for within ourselves and around us are elements which would halt our progress, but as Christians we have the presence and help of the Spirit of God who abides with us for ever. Then, too, the day is coming when "God . . . will render to every man according to his deeds; To them who by *patient continuance* in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."

"Therefore turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and *wait on thy God continually*",
(Hosea 12: 6)