

(1.16) Bearing the Faults of Others

Whatever changes we cannot make in ourselves or in others ought to be patiently accepted until God deems otherwise. Consider that in such situations it is to our advantage to exercise patience without which our merits are not of great value. However, when such obstacles occur pray to the Lord for guidance and seek the help that enables us to bear hindrances cheerfully. It is not wise to use our power to simply avoid obstacles in the path of virtue as patience is not accomplished by avoiding people, things, and circumstances which are particularly taxing to us.

To some you must be compassionate because they are wavering.¹ Refute falsehood, correct error, give encouragement -- but do all with patience and with care to instruct.² However, if anyone who is admonished once or twice does not comply, do not contend with that person, do not to treat him as an enemy, but correct him as a brother³ and then leave it to God in order that His will be done and that He be honored by all the faithful since He knows how to turn evil into good.

Reflect on how to be patient in bearing the shortcomings of others, whatever they may be, for we too fall short in ways that others must tolerate. If I am unable to change myself into the person I want to be how can I expect others to measure up to my expectations?

*Do I expect others to be perfect
while I have not amended all of my flaws?*

*Do I seek to have others sternly corrected
but am not as open to correction as I should be?*

*Do I disagree with the liberty others may have
yet do not wish to be denied in anything?*

*Do I agree that others need to be bound by rules and regulations
as long they do not restrain my ways?*

*Do I use the same scale of fairness and justice to weigh others
compared to myself?*



¹ Jude 1:22

² 2 Timothy 4:2

³ 2Thess 3:15

If we were all perfect there would be nothing to bearing others for the love of God. But God has so ordained things that we encounter learning experiences from bearing another's burdens. No one is perfect, no one is without fault, no one is without burdens to carry, no one is an island to themselves, no one is wise enough in and of themselves; hence we need to accept, comfort, help, instruct, and even admonish one another.

Man reveals his virtue when adversity is encountered for in those times his inner strength becomes apparent.

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 16 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)