

2024 11 10 / James 5:7-8, 1 Corinthians 13:4
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Patience

Today we will talk about the meaning of patience, and patience factors literally and spiritually.

1 The Meaning of Patience

Paul presents patience as the first expression of love, positioned at the head of the apostle's Love chapter: "Love is patient" (1 Cor. 13:4). Or "Love suffers long." The Greek word used here for patience is a descriptive one. It figuratively means "taking a long time to boil." Think about a pot of boiling water. What factors determine the speed at which it boils? The size of the stove? No. The pot? The utensil may have an influence, but the primary factor is the intensity of the flame. Water boils quickly when the flame is high. It boils slowly when the flame is low. Patience keeps the flame low. Patience isn't naive. It doesn't ignore misbehavior in the relationship. It waits. It listens. It's slow to boil. This is how God treats us. And, according to Jesus, this is how we should treat others.

We know the parable of the unforgiving debtor. A king decided to bring his accounts up to date with the servants who had borrowed money from him. His bookkeeper found a man who owed billions of dollars. The king declared that the man and his wife and children were to be sold to pay the debt. Due to his inability to pay, the man was about to lose everything and everyone dear to him. The man fell down before the king and begged him, "Oh, sir, be patient with me, and I will pay it all." Then the king was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

The word "patience" surprises the reader. The debtor does not plead for mercy or forgiveness; he pleads for patience. Jesus uses it twice in this story and never again. It appears nowhere else in the Gospels. Perhaps the scarce usage is the first-century equivalent of a highlighter. Jesus reserves the word for one occasion to make one point. Patience is more than a virtue; it is the beautiful road upon which God's grace and approaches us, which is in Paul's letter more clearly visible. The king was patient, and the man with the billion-dollar debt was forgiven.

But then the story takes a turn. When the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. "Be patient and I will pay it," he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and jailed until the debt could be paid in full. The king is stunned. How could the man be so impatient? The cancellation is so fresh! He was forgiven so much; then he should love much. But he didn't. If God is so patient, then we can show some patience to our fellow humans. Can we? Yes, we can! Love is patient. I want to explain a couple of factors that help us to be patient.

2 Patience already given to us

When God requests something from us, it is what God has already given to us. Patience is also a fruit of His Spirit. It hangs from the tree of Galatians 5:22: "The Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience." How does the impatient man choose the patience that God offers? When we are firmly rooted in the love of God, we find all the spiritual fruits within us, one after the other. By abiding in Jesus, we are connected to the love that brings us the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The fruits are who Jesus is. We become united with Jesus, becoming an inner man. By aligning ourselves with the Lord, we will find patience. Our effort should be to be in Jesus by surrendering our thoughts and desires. At this point, no special effort is needed to be patient. Patience is right there. Patience is always present, stretching out her hands. Patience will embrace you. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Patience is powerful. We have promises of God in life regarding things that matter. The Bible provides far more than 700 promises. Promises for our walk with God, our family, our friends, our calling, our work, our business, and so on. I keep a record of the promises that have come to me through scripture, prophecy, dreams, visions, and so on.

We thank God for patience. When we rejoice in God's presence, patience rises up in us to counter any negative reaction. When we praise the Lord, there is no room for negativity. God's presence allows us to anticipate the realization of His promises. In James 5:7-8, he likens it to a farmer waiting for the seed he planted to grow. Patience allows us to be still, knowing that God is in charge of growth and fruitfulness.

Faith and patience are both dynamic attributes to have in the same situation. Patience has dynamic power to resist the negative, and faith has incredible power to realize the blessings and favors of the promises in Christ. James saw the same revelation as Paul. **In James 1:2-4, he says, "Consider all circumstances as joyful, knowing that the testing of faith produces patience, which guarantees we will become fully mature and lacking in nothing."** Thus, patience takes us to a level of partnership with God's presence.

So patience is the seed bed for real growth in Christ, because it's entirely about the delight in waiting for him. Knowing that a favorable outcome is guaranteed because we dwell in him, we find the partnership of patience and faith in our difficult situation. It sees it as a preparation to fully inherit the promises of God.

3 Patience and Understanding

Proverbs 14:29 states that "patient people have great understanding." When we truly understand other people, we can be patient because we understand why they think and behave that way. The Bible says patience comes with understanding. Some time ago, I attended a leadership conference. As the speaker began, I was distracted by a couple of voices in the back of the room; two men were mumbling to each other. The sound bothered me a lot when the speaker offered some explanations. I turned my head with somewhat anger and soon found that

a pastor was helping a guest Korean pastor who could not understand the English language at all. All of a sudden, everything changed. Patience replaced impatience. Why? Because patience always comes with understanding. Don't miss the connection between understanding and patience. Before you complain, listen well, find out other people's real situations, and have empathy. We tend to be caught up in our own world. If it differs from my thoughts, we tend to think it is wrong. Be patient with others. Above all, love is patient.

4 Patience and Hurry

When our faith is strong, often the enemy doesn't wage war by using huge attacks or obvious battles. Rather he uses simple, everyday ways to distract us from the purposes of God. One of those ways is hurry and another is pressure. Hurry and pressure are two of his favorite devices. Many people get out of alignment with God simply because they're hurrying. Too busy to pray, too busy to worship or meditate, too busy to enjoy intimacy with God.

I don't see that pattern in the life of Jesus. If ever there was a man who was busy and had the right to rush, it would have been him. He was trying to change an entire religious system and free the world in three short years. He was very busy, but he was never in a hurry. He only did what he saw his Father doing. He was surrounded by people wanting many things from him, yet he could stop and notice Zacchaeus in a tree or take a detour through Samaria to connect with a woman drawing water from a well.

These days, people greatly value speed in their communication, food service, postal delivery, and most aspects of daily life. We are driven by hurry. We rush through everything we do. In front of the microwave, we hurry. Even when we are doing something we love, like reading, I tend to speed ahead to the next part. Sometimes I do not know what I've read and go back to read it again. We do not have enough time to digest it. We don't choose patience. The culture has created a generation of impatient people. It is one of the enemy's plans that steals your attention and keeps you away from God. **Hurry and obedience to the Lord do not go together. Hurry and love also do not go together.** And while the world may be more hurried than ever before, we have the fruit of patience offered by God. We need to pick up the fruit. Relying on God in everything and abiding in Jesus, patience becomes a beautiful road where God's grace flows and where God's promises are fulfilled.

It takes patience to build important, lasting things, especially spiritual maturity and fulfilled promise. However, our hurried nature desires an instant download from heaven instead. Growth of faith never happens in one day, one week, or even one month. Abraham had to walk the road of faith for fifty years with patience until he was finally able to receive the promise fully. He had to grow until he was fully obedient, even in sacrificing his only son, Isaac. The greater the promise, the more time it takes. Whenever you have to wait, fill your heart with gratitude and with great expectation for the promise. It is the way of God. It has too many advantages for you, and He doesn't want you to miss any of them.