

Series: God Is Patient #1801

Title: Various Scriptures
The Patience of God

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. You have chosen an excellent day to be with us as we continue to talk about the excellencies of God by speaking now about His patience. Friends, God is patient! He is really, very patient. He is so patient that the word patience does not do His patience justice. You know this about the Living God, don't you? You have firsthand experience with His patience in your life. I know I sure have. If God were not patient, if He were impatient, then we would not be here today because even one of our sins would be enough for holy God to obliterate an *unholy* people. And yet, here we are by the patient grace of our loving God.

And so let's talk about this communicable attribute of our great God. He is patient. This is a communicable perfection in that we can relate to patience. *Incommunicable* perfections are excellencies like God's omnipotence (He is all-powerful), God's omniscience (He is all-knowing), God's self-existence (He is completely self-sustaining; He depends on no other), or God's immutability (God never changes). We cannot relate to these attributes, which are found only in the Lord. But we can be patient. Now we are, of course, not even close to being as patient as God is, because God is God and we are human. He is perfect. We are *imperfect*. Nevertheless, human beings can demonstrate patience. So this is another of the *communicable* attributes, excellencies, and perfections of God.

Speaking frankly about myself for a moment, I must confess that I am not sure how this happened but somehow I am less patient than I used to be. Rather than becoming more patient over time, I have observed a greater *impatience* in me. Maybe it is because I feel greater urgency to get things done as time seems to be slipping away, *quickly*? Maybe I am trying to fit too much into a day, an hour, into a moment and I get frustrated if I cannot complete a task with the efficiency I had expected? The fast paced society in which we live, this certainly has not helped me to be more patient.

Here is an example. The other day, for some reason unbeknownst to me, websites were not loading on my mobile phone as quickly as I needed them to. I was out, in the parked car, wanting to research my next stop and I could not get to what I wanted online as fast as I wanted. I could feel the angst rising in me. "Come on, come on, load! Hurry up. Urgh! Why is this taking so long?" I moved the car up a spot to see if I could get a better signal. Finally, I got what I needed (like maybe one minute later). *One minute*, I could not wait patiently for *one single minute*? What is wrong with me? A lack of patience is what's wrong!

And then I thought, you never used to be like this. It made me think about what has changed with me. And I do not have any stunning insight. I just know that whereas I was once a more patient person, as I get older I find the patience dwindling. I noted this is as yet another thing for me to work on, to pray about, to ask God the Father to help me with. I agree with what Pastor Harry Reeder wrote. Harry who is now with the Lord, quote, "God is patient. I am not. I am learning patience. God is patience. I am developing patience. God is displaying His. Clearly, the patience of God towards us is absolutely staggering...God is patient. He doesn't have to learn it. He is it. He is not developing [patience]. He continually displays [patience]. I am grateful that I can count on the fact that the God of all grace and glory is patient (*The Patience of God*, Ligonier Ministries Blog, September 1, 2004)." Close quote.

Furthermore, I want to give personal testimony up front that God has been bountifully, wonderfully patient with me. You should know this about me as we meet together. You are listening to a man who has long experienced the abiding patience of the Lord. As I have alluded to, I am a constant work in progress. And I believe Christ is shaping me into the person He wants me to be. He is preparing me for glory. Philippians 1, verse 6 comes to mind, "**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**"

And in order for Christ to complete His good work in me, well, believe me, this requires the perfect patience of Almighty God, because I am a sinner through and through, I am stubborn, I am slow, and I progress and and then regress. I am human.

So, I pause to publicly *thank* God for being patient with me. What about you? Would you like to acknowledge that God is patient with you? Can you testify to His patience in your life?

And are you patient with yourself and with others? How do you do when things are not going your way? What's your mood like in traffic or when a subordinate at work has not done their task in a timely manner? What kind of reaction do your children get when you have already told them *three times* to clean up after themselves or go do their homework or to get up and get ready for school? How patient are you when your spouse is running late? And a hundred other examples? To be sure, some of you within the sound of my voice *are* patient. You might even be a very patient person. That's godly. To be patient is to be like God. But as we will see, none of us can meet the perfect standard of God's patience.

Let us open our lives, our hearts, and our minds to search the Scriptures and find the everlasting, enduring patience of God. To do this, I want to first say something general about finding God's patience in the Bible. Second, I think it wise to define patience in God. And then we are going to meet an individual in the New Testament, a person who experienced the abundant patience of our Lord.

It is true that as we read the Bible we may not immediately see God as being patient, because the word is not used as often as say God's grace or love or mercy or lovingkindness. God's wrath, God's judgment, and God's righteousness is more obvious. But that is because God's patience is a part of His mercy, His grace, and His love, even of His judgment. So when we ponder these other excellencies we find patience therein. For example, here are a couple of texts that undoubtedly speak of the patience of God, even though we do not have the specific word. Exodus chapter 34 and verse 6, "**Then the Lord passed by in front of [Moses] and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.'**" Surely this speaks of the Lord's patience. God is saying, "I AM patient." Exodus 34, verse 6.

In Psalm chapter 86 and verse 15 we read, "**You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.**" That's His patience. Psalm 86.15.

Dropping further back in the Old Testament, in Numbers chapter 14 and verse 18 we have a perfect Word from God to this generation in which we now live. Listen to Numbers 14.18, "**The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty...**" Here, we have on display the patience of God towards sinners. He is slow to anger. God does not have a temper. He does not suddenly lash out in a rage. God is abundant in lovingkindness. He is forgiving of our iniquities and transgressions. This is patience. Yet, God's patience will one day run out; it will reach His limits and then God will judge the guilty. *Unrepentant* sinners will be found guilty and will be condemned. Numbers 14, verse 18.

This is a good Scripture to share with someone who assumes that because God has not already, obviously judged the guilty that He will *never* do so. We should not be lulled to sleep by God's patience, mistaking His abundant lovingkindness for acceptance of our wicked ways. No! The Bible says "He will by no means clear *the guilty*..." We must trust in Christ, and in His righteousness applied to our lives, if we are to escape the judgment of God on our lives.

Let me put it this way: the best way to find God's patience in the Bible is not to look for the word "patience" or "patient," but rather to observe the ways in which God acts towards people. Here, look for what He does not only for what He says. I will remind us of this.

Speaking of Numbers 14.18, this verse leads us into a very good definition for God's patience that I want to share with you as we prepare to close. This definition comes to us from author and pastor, and a man I greatly admire, Arthur W Pink (who is also with the Lord). He correctly states, "Divine patience is that power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them...the patience of God is chiefly upon Himself. Patience causes Him to sustain great injury without immediately avenging Himself (*The Attributes of God*, 79-80)." Close quote.

More about this next time as we continue to discover the patience of God.

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