

**Series: God Is Patient #1805**

**Title: Various Scriptures**

***Patience with People***

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. We are talking about God's patience on display in the life of Peter. And last time we saw how Peter learned patience from Christ's parables. Peter, patience, and parables. That was our theme. In their years together, Simon Peter learned how patient God is from the Son of God, Jesus. This happened in two ways. First, Peter observed God's patience watching and listening to Christ and second, Peter experienced how patient God was with *him*. He had first-hand experience. And we're coming to that, but now let's hear Jesus reveal God's patience by including us in the harvesting of souls for God's kingdom.

I am reading from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 9 and verses 36-38. This is Matthew 9, beginning in verse 36, **"Seeing the people, [Christ] felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then [Jesus] said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"** Jesus felt the powerful emotion of compassion. He met people who were distressed and dispirited. The analogy: they were like sheep without a shepherd. These men and women and children needed spiritual help; deliverance from their many sins. And notice this: Christ says meeting that need will require more workers. Who are these laborers? The laborers are all those who already believe in Jesus; genuine Christian people.

The harvest is a spiritual harvest of souls for salvation. And more workers are required to do this important work of harvesting. So what are Christians to do? We are to pray to the Lord of the harvest (God) to send out more laborers into His, that is God's, vineyard. Catch this: our prayers have a role in the harvest that God will bring into Himself. Are we workers harvesting for the Lord? Are we laborers praying for more laborers to join us in our labor? There are so many souls to be saved, and God includes us in this.

Personally, I marvel at this and cannot help but to believe this reveals God's patience. Do you realize how longsuffering the Lord must be to involve us in evangelism? Frankly, most Christian workers are not working at this. When is the last time you shared the gospel with someone in your life? Anyone, a stranger seated next to us on a airplane or bus ride, a colleague at the office, a student at school, a barista who prepares our morning coffee? A family member? Can we honestly assess our lives and say that we have been faithful in being a harvest worker and praying for more harvest workers? Do we have the same heart of compassion Jesus had to people who are distressed and dispirited? There are an awful lot of those people around this day. What are we doing to proactively share Christ with them? For too many of us, the answer is *not much*.

Therefore, since God knows we will be lazy and too afraid, and unprepared and unequipped and ashamed for this, *why* does He include us? Surely He knows how long it is going to take to reap souls when the "workers are few." While I do not know why the Father includes us, according to Jesus He does. Christ commands us to work the field of souls. And so, God patiently waits and patiently works in us to send us out to fulfil His Great Commission. God is patient by including Christians in the ministry of evangelism!

On the other side of this, God is patient with souls who are ready to be harvested. It takes a long time for most people to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. Evangelizing people is slow-going. And when Christ lived among us, and as Peter watched, He demonstrated how to show compassion to sinners such that, slowly and over time, they too will repent. I am thinking of Luke's Gospel, chapter 5, verses 29-32. Going from Matthew to Luke and chapter 5, beginning in verse 29.

**"And Levi gave a big reception for [Jesus] in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other *people* who were reclining *at the table* with them. <sup>30</sup> The Pharisees and their scribes *began* grumbling at His disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?' <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, '*It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.* <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"**

I take it from this text that we should emulate what Levi and our Lord do. Levi, also known as Matthew, soon after Christ identifies him and calls him, Levi throws a big party at his own home for all the other tax collectors and sinners. The immediate response of Levi to Jesus was to tell all his friends about the Lord. That's evangelism. And what does he do? He invites them to his home for dinner. We're often finding excuses for why we do not evangelize and one of our excuses is we don't know what to do *practically*. Well, what about this? Host a dinner party, invite sinners, and tell them, in word and by deed, about Jesus!

Eating and drinking with these outcasts? Well, this got Jesus into a lot of trouble with the always condemning and prideful Pharisees. They're so antagonistic. We too have to go against judgmental religious rulers in our churches when we promote inviting in the equivalent of today's tax collectors and sinners. So let's follow the example. "*It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.*" <sup>32</sup>I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Who is unwell in your community? Who is sick (that is, sin-sick)? Not those who are already Christians! Not the guys on the elder board or the pastors and deacons! The ones who desperately need the healing touch of Doctor Jesus are the sinners to be called to repentance. These are the people who we are to host at our dinner parties.

If I may, the homosexuals and the lesbians and the transgender people. The crass and foul mouthed. The God haters. The evolutionists. The blasphemers and backstabbers and bullies. Our enemies and those who will persecute us for our beliefs. The liberals! (I will get mail on that one.) All of these people and more should be at Christian people's dinner tables.

One of the many things I find encouraging about Levi's big reception at his house is that Jesus was reclining at the table with these folks. He was talking with them, listening to them, and just spending time hanging out, eating and drinking. Being normal. I bet there was laughter. It's a very casual setting. It was an invitational setting. One man, Levi, invited his friends to meet Jesus. And the Lord attended and very patiently and kindly and graciously met with them. We do not know what came out of this. We do not know what the *results* were. We would be right to expect that some of these followed the Lord and became His real disciples, but not all. Just like when we sit down with people and talk Jesus, we never know what the results might be or how many of the people we talk to will believe in Him.

The point is Jesus shows off God's patience here. From our human perspective, based on how *we* tell time, it is apparent God is not moving at *our* breakneck speed to save sinners. In human time, God is moving *slowly* to save sinners. So, in our evangelism, in our sowing the seed of the Word of God, and in our harvesting in the fields of souls, we should be patient as God is patient. We should lovingly and graciously be hospitable and open our homes to sinners and as the Holy Spirit allows, taking our cues from Him, boldly and lovingly and unapologetically tell of all that Christ is. *And* we must be forbearing, patient, waiting to see what the Holy Spirit does with our witness and testimony. Friends, our Lord is patient with tax collectors and sinners. So too should we be.

And remember, Peter was there. He's watching all this. He's listening. He's learning.

Third, Jesus demonstrates God's patience as He took His own, sweet time to heal certain people. I am thinking of Jairus' daughter. Remember her? Since we are already in Luke's Gospel let me pick-up the story here in Luke 8, verses 40-49.

**"And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. <sup>41</sup> And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and *began* to implore [Jesus] to come to his house; <sup>42</sup> for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as [Jesus] went, the crowds were pressing against Him.**

**<sup>43</sup> And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, <sup>44</sup> came up behind [Jesus] and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, 'Who is the one who touched Me?' And while they were all denying it, Peter said, 'Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.' <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, 'Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.'**

**<sup>47</sup> When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before [Jesus], and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. <sup>48</sup> And [the Lord] said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.' <sup>49</sup> While [Jesus] was still speaking, someone came from *the house of the synagogue official*, saying, 'Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.'"**

We leave off there, on a cliffhanger. Jesus is delayed. Jairus' daughter is dead. Find out what happens next time on God Is.

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