

Series: God Is Patient #1811

Title: Various Scriptures
A P.S. on Patience

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 may have had the impression, when we finished last time, that our series *God Is Patient* was over. Well, that was my intention, but I want to add this post script, this P.S. today. When we see God's patience in the Scripture this gives us much needed encouragement. Isn't it great to know that God is patient with us?

Personally, I find this very re-assuring. How about you? I'd love to hear from you if the forbearance of Christ means something for you in your life. Let's have a two-way street kind of communication with one another and so let me receive your email or letter this week. My email is mark@godisministry.org, that's m-a-r-k@godisministry.o-r-g and the mailing address is God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. And these will be repeated at the end.

Meditating on the patience of God reminds us to first, be patient with ourselves. Often, as believers, as all of us are in the process of Christ sanctifying us – by His Word and by the Holy Spirit, of Christ making us holy – we sin against God and one another, we fall and we fail, and we fight like the dickens against our flesh, the world, and the Devil. It is easy to get discouraged and defeated. Who out there is not satisfied with your progress in becoming the Christian that Christ has called you to be? As much as we want the trajectory of our lives to be always upward, increasing in obedience to God, and pressing on to maturity in Christ, we are not. This is why we continually confess our sins and ask the Lord to again forgive us our trespasses. And He faithfully does.

The patience of our heavenly Father exists at this hour and always for those of us who feel defeated in our battle with sin in this life. We relate to Peter. Even when he was convinced that he could not and would not *ever* deny Jesus, that's just when Peter denied Christ most ardently and forcefully. He sinned and how discouraged this must have made him. He wept bitterly. But the longsuffering of the Lord was there for him, and is there for us. 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 4 says, "**Love is patient...**" And 1 John chapter 4 and verse 8 says, "**God is love.**" Because God is love, God is patient. My friend, God loves you and He is patient towards you. So, be patient with yourself. As long as you have that Spirit empowered desire in your heart to love and serve the Lord, you are moving in the right direction. Cling to Christ and keep on keeping on.

Do not give up and do not give in today. Turn to God in prayer and invite Him to make you holy as He is holy. Ask Him to deliver you from sin and it's consequences. Plead with the Holy Spirit to continue the good work He has begun in you and to complete it unto the day of Christ Jesus! Be reminded that God remembers we are human and He will not leave us or abandon us on our lifelong journey with Him. He is patient. His patience is for us. And we should, therefore, be patient with ourselves and with others in the body of Christ.

Meditating on the patience of God reminds us to second, be patient in prayer and gospel witness for others to believe in Christ. Each of us know someone who is not saved from their sins, because they have thus far rejected Christ as the only Savior. These are lost souls, meandering around in the world like hikers without a compass, not knowing or knowing and not caring, that they are headed towards total destruction when they one day face God in judgment. Our hearts are broken for these people, many of whom are family members and friends. And we long to see them in the Kingdom of God with us. We long to share with them the eternal joy of knowing God through Christ and of being transformed by the indwelling presence of the Spirit.

And so we have been trying to share with them the gospel. We have told them, as graciously and loving as we know how, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15, verses 3 and 4). That's the Good News. The bad news is they are a sinner with no hope of redemption. The Good News is Christ has died to permanently take away their every sin and to make them holy in preparation for meeting *God*.

I referred to this the other day, concerning harvesting in the field of souls, we need to be patient. Gospel witness is hard work. This is never easy. It takes time, usually a very long time. The soil of people's hearts is hard, rocky, and overcome with weeds. When we spread the seed of God's Word the soil rejects it. Again we become disheartened. Friends, what we need is to appeal to the Lord of the harvest in persistent prayer, badgering Him for the souls of these people. And what we need is to persist in sharing this Good News. And while we wait for the Holy Spirit to prepare a soft and welcoming soil in hearts, we exercise patience. One way or another God will work the soil. He will be faithful to answer our prayers and affirm our gospel witness. I am not saying everyone will be saved. They will not. But, some will. And perhaps the least likely person (from our perspective) will be among the redeemed one day. So, be patient in evangelism and discipleship towards others. As God and other Christians were patient towards you before you were saved, so too be patient with these.

Meditating on the patience of God reminds us to first, be patient with ourselves. Meditating on the patience of God reminds us to second, be patient in prayer and gospel witness for others to believe in Christ. And third, meditating on the patience of God reminds us to be patient towards wandering Christians who are walking away from Christ. Do you know someone who is a believer, but is not acting like it? Do you know a man or woman or child who is genuinely saved, but is not walking in step with the Spirit? How about someone who is apostate? That is, they have renounced their faith? I do not know about you, but I know a few people like this. And it hurts my heart.

This is a common experience among all Christians, and especially those of you who are parents and grandparents. You have seen a child or a grandchild that once had a vibrant, growing faith begin to backslide, to pack up some of their belongings and to hit the road just like the prodigal in the parable Jesus tells. Like me, you could see it coming. A waning interest in the Bible, attending church less, a negative attitude towards other Christians, a greater acceptance and embrace of many of the lies being told about God and Christianity? We watch as these beloved people accept deception. Maybe this was a young person who left for college or university loving God and came home *unloving* Him?

What are we to do about this? We are to do this: *be patient*. We are to increase our trust in the Lord, and believe that He will bring His lost sons and daughters home. The Great Shepherd will bring His lost sheep back into the fold. Frankly, this will be done in God's time, not ours. We might not even see the return in our lifetime. But all who are truly saved, will always be saved. Romans 8, verse 30 says, **"These whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."** The whole salvation process is complete for someone who is genuinely (there is that word again) saved. Once we are justified we are never *unjustified*.

John chapter 3 and verse 15 states, **"Whoever believes will in Him have eternal life."** And Romans 8, verses 38-39 seals it. **"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Believe these promises for your wayward relative or friend. And I will too.

You say, "Well, by the way this person is acting I am not even sure they were ever sincerely saved!" Ah, then go back and share again the gospel with them. And be persistent in prayer. What do you think the father in the story of the prodigal son was doing when his son was gone? He was petitioning God to bring him back! That's why his response was this. I am reading Luke 15, verses 20-24,

"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

Be patient towards wandering Christians who are walking away from Christ. Let us be patient in all these ways, because God is patient. And now we really are done with this, I think valuable, series on the longsuffering and forbearing ways of our heavenly Father. I trust this encouraged you. Join us again next time as we continue to discover who God Is! ---END---