

Series: God Is Patient #1802

Title: Various Scriptures

God's Patience for the Godless

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. I hope you were with us last time as we began this current series *God Is Patient*. If not, or if you cannot remember what was said, this reminder as we begin on this new day God has given to us. Patience is one of God's divine perfections, or attributes if you will. It is a communicable perfection in that we also know something about patience. We can relate to the Lord in this respect. Some of us are even very patient people, some of us are not.

Reflecting, generally, on God as the God of patience we shared some texts from the Bible. And then we said this: 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 God does not only for what God says. Given that patience is included in God's mercy, grace, love, lovingkindness, also in God's wrath, God's judgment, and God's righteousness we do not always see patience so clearly (at least as clearly as we do these other excellencies), but the resounding testimony of all of Scripture is clear: we have a very patient God, as most of us know from personal experience.

The second thing we did was to define patience as it relates to God. We borrowed this from AW Pink and his book *The Attributes of God*, "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 (79-80)." That's solid. And interesting, isn't it?

Yes, our heavenly Father's patience is manifest towards us. We'll see this soon. But more so, God exercises patience on Himself in that He causes Himself to be forbearing with people who sin against Him, who wilfully disobey Him, who do not love Him, worship Him, and honor Him with our whole lives. This is very true: "Patience causes Him to sustain great injury without immediately avenging Himself." We have a thousand examples. When I originally wrote this to broadcast the Olympic games were opening in Paris, France and this included a very sick, vile, and blasphemous mockery of the Last Supper that our Lord Jesus Christ had with His disciples on the night He was betrayed.

The famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci is well known to us. Jesus sits center with His twelve Apostles around Him in that High Renaissance work of art. The director and choreographers and whoever else was responsible for the spectacle on TV from Paris used drag queens and a nearly naked man painted blue to stand in for Jesus and the Apostles. While the director later denied this was a mockery of the Last Supper and rather a nod to the pagan celebration featuring Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility, wine, and revelry did that make it any better? And I do not personally buy this explanation. This display was a demonic and Satanic presentation designed to say to the whole world: *we are god! We bow to no Lord, we obey no authority beyond and above ourselves and what we deem to be right and true is what is right and true.*

And yet, despite this – and the whole world saw it (eventually, if not live) – despite this God did not immediately avenge Himself. The people responsible for this offense live. The games went on. The city of Paris and the nation of France still exist. Why? Because God is patient. Still He desires that the people responsible for this and the participants in the stunt repent of their sins by investing their faith in Christ. God, from heaven, gives life to those who found this funny and lent it their full approval. He continues to feed and water them and meet their needs. Those who hate God have not *yet* faced His justified wrath. That is not say they *will* not. God, with clarity in the Scripture, repeatedly states that His judgment will fall on the unrighteous one day. But, in His mercy and enduring kindness, *not yet*. There is still time for repentance – a genuine sorrow for sin in the hearts of wicked people.

For many of us, myself included, who saw this live or heard about it later, if it were us we would have sent fire down from heaven in lightning quick fashion. We are stunned that God did not. But that is because we do not have the patience of the Lord.

So I affirm Pink's definition of God's patience. Let me give it to you again. "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 patience of God is a display of His mercy and we have seen that in Paris and since. And remember, that stunt at the opening ceremony of the Olympics is only one example. All around us evil presents itself every day. But, as Galatians says, **"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."**

My Christian friends, let's leave the judgment to God and trust that He will avenge those who so abuse His patience. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord.

Having said something, generally, about finding God's patience in the Bible. And having defined that patience, I hope you will join me as we live in the text over the next several days. I have chosen a person who experienced the patience of God in some remarkable ways and I want to follow this individual's life in the presence of Jesus so that we can grasp divine patience in a captivating way. Who is this? I will tell you next time. For now, think with me just how many Bible characters experienced the patience of Almighty God. Yes, God's Word is full of God's patience towards pagan people who rejected Him, but let's think about how wonderfully longsuffering God was to *His* people.

With full justification I could have chosen to speak about Adam and Eve (the first people). God was certainly patient with them when they sinned against Him in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). They lived for a time, and repented, whereas they could have been stuck down dead instantaneously for their disobedience. God was patient with Cain, the first murderer. He was patient with their descendants for whom wickedness was so prevalent the Lord sent a worldwide, global flood. (The Lord patiently saved only Noah and his family.)

And then again God was patient when Noah's descendants refused to multiply over the whole earth and instead gathered together and built the Tower of Babel. The Lord came down and confused their language and dispersed them throughout the world anyway, but He did not wipe them out in a mass and final judgment. Our heavenly Father was patient with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Read their lives in Genesis, you can't miss the endurance of the Lord with the Patriarchs. And especially with Jacob. Oh how YHWH was patient with Jacob!

Turn to Exodus and watch the Lord's patience with Moses and Pharaoh and the Israelites. And in Joshua and the conquering of the Promised Land. What about during the time of the Judges? There was the apostasy of the faith, which led to moral awfulness and then political anarchy and still God was patient. God's people were not satisfied having Him as their King so they appealed to the Lord and He gave them Saul, and then David and so on. Read 1 Samuel through the end of 2 Chronicles and beyond. You'll see this. Job. How the Lord was patient with Job. The Psalms are *packed* with rejoicing and celebration at the grace and mercy YHWH displays.

And the Old Testament finishes with the prophets. I have recently been studying Jeremiah and Daniel, specifically, and you want to see the patience of God for His people? Read even select portions of the books those godly men wrote. You'll capture how the Lord deals with His sons and daughters, even in judgment when they were taken captive by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians, according to perfect patience. Heaven reigns down patience on the disobedient Israelites.

Turn the pages (or scroll down the screen) in your copy of God's Word and come into the New Testament. Find how patient God was with Mary and Joseph, the disciples and Apostles, the crowds of people who watched and followed after Jesus, how longsuffering God was with the Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes and zealots and religious rulers. Oh! How patient the Lord was with Saul (better known as Paul after his conversion). Paul Himself tells us of the patience of God for him. Christ demonstrates the patience of God. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the patient of God, because the Son and the Spirit are God. All of this in the New Testament.

Friends, read the Bible. From cover to cover God is patient. And next time we meet we'll take just one of these individuals and follow their life to see just how patient God is. Join us because God Is.

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