

What is Patience?



Patience (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys To Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The theme for my talks this week is "Patience," a theme which is greatly neglected in our contemporary Western culture—even among Christians—yet essential for successful Christian living.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note. Now back to our theme, "Patience."

There's something about this word that does not attract most of us. In fact, it's rather frightening. It suggests something negative, something we'd rather have to turn away from. We would rather listen to almost any other subject, yet it's an essential condition for success in the Christian life to understand and apply what the Bible teaches about patience. So don't let that instinctive, negative reaction keep you from hearing and receiving this message on patience.

First of all, I need to say a little bit about the word that I use because over the centuries some words in the English language have changed their meaning and patience is one of them. Many English-speaking Christians have their foundation of Bible knowledge from the King James version and in the King James version, what we call "patience" today was then called "longsuffering." And I have to say that's rather a good description. Someone has said, "There is only one way to acquire long-suffering and that is by suffering long." However, what the King James called "long-suffering" today we call "patience" and what the King James called "patience" today we call "perseverance" or "endurance." So I'm going to use the modern terminology from now on but you need to bear in mind what I said.

We need to understand the difference between patience, in its modern sense, and perseverance. Perseverance is essentially active, even aggressive. It's moving, it's fighting,

it's making an effort, it's running forward. This is clearly expressed in Hebrews 12:1, where the writer says:

> "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (NIV)

Let me just point out that the King James version says, "Let us run with patience," but the modern translation is "perseverance."

So, perseverance is a characteristic that you need for running a race. It implies strength, effort, endurance, pressing forward. It's essentially active. But on the other hand, patience is essentially passive. It's standing still, it's not doing anything, it's waiting. And I want to tell you that neither of them is easy, but perseverance is a whole lot easier than patience. And yet patience has a place in the experience of God's people for which there is no substitute. Nothing can take the place of patience.

We need to understand that God's people are by definition a waiting people. This is what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10, speaking about what had been happening to the Thessalonian Christians and how their neighbors spoke about them:

> "...They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [That's the first change—they turn from idols to the true God to serve Him. But it doesn't end there:] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." (NIV)

You see, there are two things put together there. We are to serve the living God but we are also to wait for His Son from heaven, Jesus. So God's people are not merely called to serve, but they're called to wait. And that's where perseverance and patience have their place. We serve with perseverance, we wait with patience.

We need to understand that Jesus Himself is waiting. We don't often think of that but Hebrews 10:11–13 speaks about Jesus as our waiting High Priest:

> "And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He [that's Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet." (NAS)

So notice that at present, in heaven, Jesus is at the right hand of God and He's waiting. And as I understand it, He's waited nearly two thousand years. That's a tremendous example of patience. He's waiting for the Father to intimate to Him the moment when He is to return in power and glory—the moment when He is to receive His bride, the Church, to Himself. And I understand that Jesus has a deep, deep longing—something that we cannot even fully comprehend to be united forever with His Bride. But He exercises tremendous patience. He does not go ahead of the Father's timing.

One of the essential features of patience, which I'll be emphasizing several times, is that we observe God's timing. God is the conductor of the orchestra and we watch His baton. You see, an impatient violinist in an orchestra can spoil the whole thing but being even one fraction of a beat ahead of the score. And somehow that's how we have to see ourselves, as instruments in God's orchestra with God as the conductor. And it takes patience to wait for that little nod of the conductor's head or that little motion of His baton which tells us, "Now's the time for you to come in."

The Bible is just full of the most wonderful promises to those who wait and I want to take a little time to encourage you in this matter of patience by just quoting a few of these many promises. I think if you were to look up the word "wait" or its equivalent in a concordance, you'd be amazed how many times God recommends to His people that they learn to wait. For instance, this is what David says in Psalm 25:4–5:

> "Make me to know Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. [I'm sure that's a prayer most of us want to pray. But, the next verse tells us one of the conditions.] Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day." (NAS)

So being taught by God includes learning to wait. In a certain sense, you can say God does not teach the impatient—at least He does teach them just one thing, that's patience. But they make no further progress in their lesson until they have learned patience. So, bear that in mind if you want to know God's ways and if you want to be wise in His paths you've got to wait. You see, God is the teacher. He not merely teaches, He chooses the curriculum and He chooses what subject we are to study in what order. We may be very excited about some prophetic theme but God's curriculum says now you need to learn faithfulness. And so we get impatient when God

isn't teaching us what we want to know. But to learn from God, you've got to let Him not merely choose the curriculum but set the order.

Again, David says in Psalm 27:13–14, and I think if you consider the career of David, you'll understand why he had so much to say about patience. Later in this week, I'll be speaking about David as an example of patience. But you remember that he was a wonderfully anointed king and then for the next ten years he endured tremendous opposition and persecution and I'm sure in those ten years he had to cultivate patience again and again and again. And this is what he says in Psalm 27. He gives some good advice:

> "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD. In the land of the living. [He was faced with a situation in which there seemed to be no hope. He was just overwhelmed by the pressure of despair. But then he comes out with this counsel:] Wait for the LORD; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD." (NAS)

So, what do we do when everything seems to be against us, the pressures are mounting, we can't see a ray of light anywhere, everything is dark and negative? One of the things we have to do, which is perhaps the hardest, is just wait. Wait until God chooses to intervene on our behalf. Don't jump the baton; don't move ahead of God. God has got the situation under control and He will move on our behalf but He'll move in His time and for us to enable Him to do that, we have to be waiting.

And then there's this wonderful description of God in Isaiah 64:4:

> "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, [He's the only God. And then it specifies one particular characteristic:] who acts on behalf of those who wait for him." (NIV)

Remember, He's the only God, you can trust Him, He's omnipotent, but He acts on behalf of those who wait for Him, those who are patient.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the patience of God Himself. My special offer this week is my book, "The Grace of Yielding." It contains vital lessons from my own experience that lifted me to a new level of Christian living. It will help you to cultivate patience in your life, too, and to reap all the benefits that flow from it. Also my complete series of talks this week on "Patience" is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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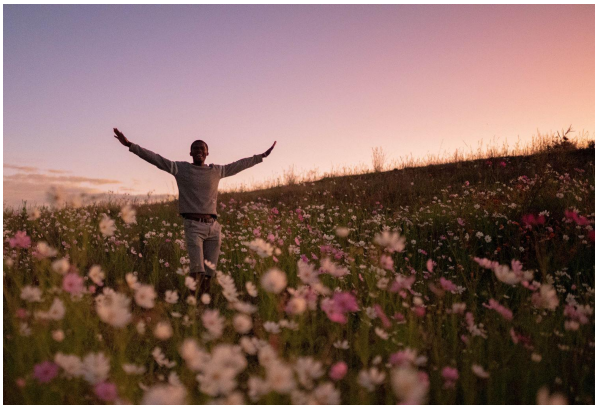

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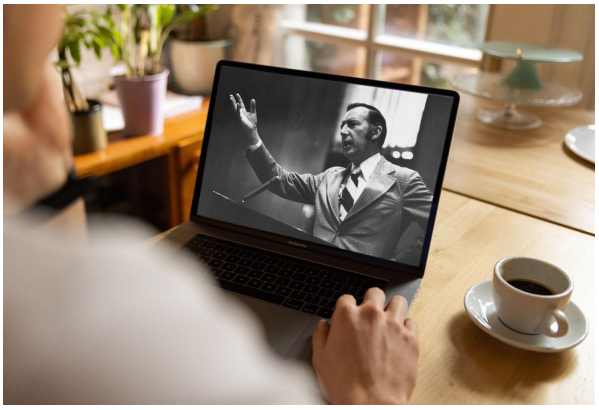

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