

Leave the Initiative with God



Patience (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week, "Patience." I trust you've been finding it helpful, if somewhat challenging.

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. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests. Each month our listeners write in to tell us of prayer requests that have been wonderfully answered. Now, back to our theme, "Patience."

I pointed out in my two previous talks, that patience is an aspect of the character of God and of Christ and it is to be reproduced in all Christians, especially those who are in Christian ministry; that it is a mark of strength and not of weakness; and that it's expressed very often in that simple act, I was going to say, but it isn't really an act, it's a simple inaction of waiting. I think, especially in our modern Western world, we're so keyed to being active that we can't even begin to believe that inaction is sometimes the right course. And yet patience, actually, leads us to inaction.

Now today I'm going to explain how patience leaves the initiative with God. That's extremely important. First of all, let's see it exemplified in the ministry of Jesus. In John 5:19, Jesus says:

> "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." (NAS)

That really is a pattern for all who are in Christian ministry. In fact, for all Christians. Jesus said, in effect, "I never pre-empt the Father. I never take the initiative out of the Father's hands. I never do something on My own until I've seen the Father do it, until I have His example before Me, His pattern, His authorization."

A little further on in John 5:30, Jesus returns to this theme and He says:

> "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just [or righteous or correct], because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (NAS)

So Jesus again says, "I'll leave the initiative to the Father. I only do what He directs Me to do, what I see exemplified in Him." And He says, "Particularly in the matter of judgment. My judgment is just, it's correct, it's trustworthy, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." You see, that reveals the real root error of impatience, is seeking your own will. And once you seek your own will and take your initiative out of the hands of God, you are no longer trustworthy in your judgment. You make foolish, hasty, rash, inaccurate judgments and you pay the price. So, believe me, it pays to cultivate patience in the matter of judgment.

And then this is exemplified in the attitude of Jesus concerning His friend, Lazarus. The report was brought to Him that Lazarus was sick, desperately sick and this is how Jesus responded:

> "When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was." (John 11:6, NAS)

That's very strange, isn't it? He knew He had the power to heal. If He hadn't been directed by the Father, He would have just raced off immediately and reached Lazarus before he died. But the Father restrained Him, the Father, I believe, revealed to Him that He had a higher purpose. So He waited two days and when He got there, Lazarus had been dead four days. That's very hard to understand. I'm sure some of His disciples and even Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, in their hearts almost criticized Jesus. "Why didn't He help us?"

And that's another aspect of being patient. Sometimes your friends, and the people close to you will misunderstand your patience. But be encouraged! There's one person who understands and that's God Himself. You see, the real problem with impatience is it takes the initiative from God. And so He's no longer responsible. When we act out of impatience, God cannot accept responsibility for our actions. He'll do His best for us, He'll follow us up and clean up the mess maybe, but He's not responsible for anything that we do out of impatience. And this is primarily a question of timing. It's not sufficient to do the right thing, what you have to do is do the right thing at the right time. Here are a number of Scriptures on this theme. James 1:19–20:

> "...but let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;" (NAS)

You know, I meet scores of people who are just the other way around—they are quick to speak but slow to hear and there's a whole lot of things they never hear and a whole lot of lessons they never learn. James goes on:

> "for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (NAS)

Then in Proverbs 15:23:

> "A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!" (NAS)

The King James version says "a word in season." Do you know it's possible to say exactly the right thing but spoil it all by saying it at the wrong moment. Oh, how many times we have that problem. Isn't that true?

I'd like to read also a rather longer passage in Ecclesiastes 3, which emphasizes the tremendous importance of right timing. This is really one of my favorite passages in the Bible. A lot of people don't read Ecclesiastes but I tell you, you're missing something if you never read it. This is the first eight verses of Ecclesiastes 3.

"There is an appointed time for everything. [Notice that—everything.] And there is a time for every event under heaven— [And then there's this long list:]

> "A time to give birth, and a time to die;
> A time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted.
> A time to kill, and a time to heal;
> A time to tear down, and a time to build up.
> A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
> A time to mourn, and a time to dance.
> A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones;
> A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing.
> A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; [Isn't that an example of patience? When you've just got to say, "I have to recognize this thing is lost. It's gone.]
> A time to keep, and a time to throw away.
> A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together;
> A time to be silent, and a time to speak.
> A time to love, and a time to hate;
> A time for war, and a time for peace." (NAS)

You see. There's I think, if I remember rightly, there are eighteen opposites there. None of them is always right and none of them is always wrong. Each is right at the right time and wrong at the wrong time. and what is required to achieve the right timing—one essential requirement—is patience. Being willing to wait.

Then you see, the opposite of patience, impatience, leads to something which is very harmful—emotionally, mentally, physically. Perhaps one of the greatest causes of sickness of all kinds today: it's fretting. This is what David says in Psalm 37:7–9:

> "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; [It would worthwhile counting sometime how many times David talks about waiting for the Lord. I believe that's one of the great secrets of his strength.] Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; [Listen, if you're impatient, you cannot rest.] Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. [Do you remember God's patience causes Him not to intervene immediately against the wicked but to wait for the right time.] Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not yourself, it leads only to evildoing. For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD, [notice the emphasis on waiting again—those who wait for the LORD,] they will inherit the land." (NAS)

You see, that's the basis of patience, that if we wait, we'll inherit. But if we're hasty, we may miss our inheritance. There's a destructive sequence that occurs in the lives of most of us and I have to tell you I've learned this from personal experience. It goes this way: impatience leads to irritability which leads to anger and very often, especially if we're trying to be good Christians, we suppress that anger. But I'm not sure that in the long run suppressed anger doesn't do more harm than expressed anger. And it's expressed later in hastiness. Let me say that again and give you that sequence: impatience, irritability, anger (frequently suppressed), and it issues in hastiness.

Listen to these words from Proverbs, which has got a lot to say about this. Proverbs 19:2:

> "Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet errs." (NAS)

You see, the implication is that to require knowledge, you've got to be patient, but if you're hasty with your feet, you'll take a wrong course.

Proverbs 21:5:

> "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage [or prosperity], but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty." (NAS)

Isn't that an amazing statement? "Everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty." I'm not a businessman but I have many acquaintances who are and I think one sure way to failure in business is to be hasty, to go ahead of your timing and your judgment.

Then again, Proverbs 29:20:

> "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (NAS)

When I read those words once they just... they shocked me. I thought, "The Bible has nothing whatever good to say about a fool." But it says a man who is hasty in his words is worse than a fool. He has less hope than a fool.

Brothers and sisters, we have to cultivate patience. If we want to succeed, if we want God's blessing, if we want our inheritance, we have to cultivate patience.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll share with you about three great men of the Bible who learned patience, which was the key to their success. 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

Transcript: TS-R131-103-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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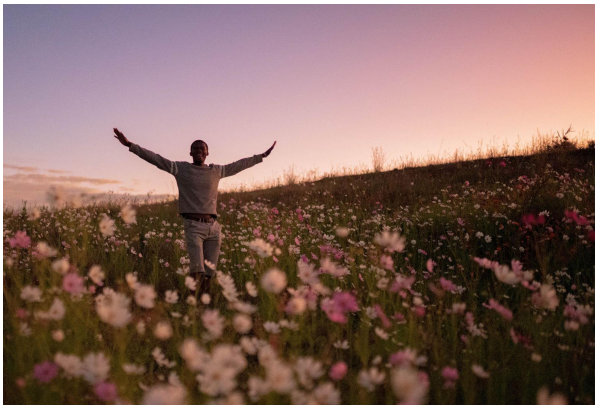

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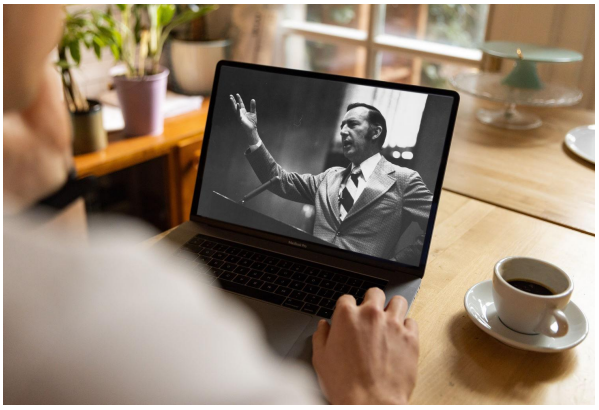

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