

Three Men Who Learned Patience



Patience (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life—and can do the same in yours. Our theme this week is "Patience."

In my previous talks, I've pointed out that the essential feature of patience, why it's so important, is that patience leaves the initiative with God whereas impatience takes it from Him. And when we take the initiative from God and act on our own initiative, God can no longer be responsible for the consequences of our actions.

I've pointed out, too, that patience is essentially a question of timing—the right timing. It's not merely doing the right thing, it's doing the right thing at the right time.

Impatience also has a very harmful effect on our whole personality, which is described in the word "fretting." Impatience leads to fretting and to hastiness and in this sense it's really a denial of our faith and it frustrates God's purposes for our lives.

Almost all successful servants of the Lord depicted in the Bible had to learn patience. Their success would have been impossible without their patience. And I don't believe that's changed. I believe to serve the Lord with success today, we have to cultivate patience just as much as the great saints of the Bible.

Today we're going to look at three examples of great men of God who had to cultivate patience. We're going to analyze the process through which God put them in order to cultivate patience in them. The first man is Abraham. God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and his wife, Sarah, was barren, could not have children, he had no son; he had no heir; but God, when he was still in that condition, promised him a prosperity like the stars of heaven. But he had to wait. In fact, he actually had to wait until he was a hundred years old and his wife, Sarah, was ninety. But, during that time of waiting, he became impatient. And through the prompting of his wife he had a son by his wife's maid, Hagar. You see what he was doing—he was trying to help God. I tell you, the times when we help God are usually disastrous. This was truly a disaster.

The result of that attempt to help God was the birth of a son who was not Sarah's son but Hagar's son, called Ishmael. And Ishmael is the primary ancestor of the Arab peoples of the Middle East and if we look at the present political situation in the Middle East today, just about four thousand years after that hasty act of Abraham, we have to acknowledge that the descendants of Ishmael are the main barrier and problem against Israel coming into their God-promised inheritance. You see, we have to emphasize this again and again. Impatience can cost us our inheritance.

Now I believe God is going to intervene and overrule and the promises of that inheritance will be fulfilled, but if you ever feel disposed to act hastily and on your own initiative and take the initiative out of the hand of God, just think for a few moments about Ishmael. Four thousand years of problems came through trying to help God.

One of the things that I've observed in my own life and the life of many other servants of God, is that most commonly our problems come through doing more, not less, than God said. Abraham's problem didn't come through failing to do what God told him to do. He always did what God told him to do. His problems came through doing something that God didn't tell him to do. And the root cause was—you know—impatience. Just think what impatience has cost Abraham and his descendants for thousands of years. Let that be a continual lesson that we never lose sight of. So that's Abraham. Now let's turn to another great servant of God—to Moses.

Moses was a descendant of Levi, He was born in Egypt while Israel were in captivity and under oppression there. Because of Pharaoh's edict, he was exposed as a little baby to die, but in desperate hope his mother put him in a little cradle of reeds and left the cradle in the edge of the River Nile. Pharaoh's daughter came down, as Egyptians still do today, to wash in the Nile and found this little baby, had compassion on the baby, adopted him as her own child, took him into the palace of Pharaoh and he was raised in Pharaoh's palace with all the benefits of life in the palace—with a particularly high level of education, with understanding in administration. All this was part of his preparation for the task God had for him. It always amuses me to think that, in a certain sense, the Lord took Moses, put him in Pharaoh's arms and said, "Here, Pharaoh, look after him, train him, teach him everything you know because in due course he's going to be the one that will administer to your people the greatest defeat they've ever received in their lives." You see, nobody ever gets the better of God. That's something we need to understand.

Well, at the age of forty, Moses became aware that he was an Israelite and he went out to see how his brother Israelites were doing and he saw an Egyptian persecuting an Israelite and he got angry, which is very natural, and he killed the Egyptian, buried him in the sand. Next day, he went out and two Israelites were mistreating one another and he tried to intervene and the one who was doing the wrong said to him, "Are you going to kill me the way you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" And he realized his crime was known and he had to flee for his life immediately. Incidentally, somebody pointed out to me once: it's easier to separate an Egyptian and an Israelite than it is to separate two Israelites. God's people, when they quarrel, are the hardest to separate.

So Moses fled to Midian and he was, in what the King James picturesquely calls "the backside of the desert" for forty years, looking after a flock of sheep. God had to put him through forty years of anonymity, exile, very humbling occupation.

Somebody asked a fellow preacher, a friend of mine, why God left him there for forty years. And my friend answered, "Because he couldn't do it in thirty-nine!" God does not waste time but He uses all the time that's necessary to get the result He wants. We have to understand that to understand patience. Because we could say, "God, you don't need to keep me in this situation any longer." But God says, "You haven't yet learned all that I want you to learn. You're going to have to stay there even if it's forty years. Then at the age of eighty, when you could have considered Moses a back number, God said, "Now you're ready. I want you to deliver My people."

So what was Moses learning in those forty years? I would say, in one word, patience. And he was an amazingly patient man. He had to be. When you consider what he went through leading the Israelites through the wilderness. If he hadn't had patience, he would have had a heart attack.

Now, it's an interesting thing that just once in those forty years in the wilderness Moses lost his patience and I want to just read the description of that. It happened at a place called Meribah, when the Israelites had arrived there, there was no water and they all started to do what they always did, which was complain against Moses. And the Lord gave Moses these instructions: Numbers 20:7–12:

> "The LORD said to Moses, 'Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.' So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the

> assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank." (NIV)

But you notice, Moses was disobedient. God told him to speak to the rock, not to strike it. Why did he strike the rock? What caused him to do that? One simple word, impatience. As they say in modern speech, "He lost his cool." And with that he lost the privilege of leading the people into the promised land. Because the next verse says:

> "But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.'" (NIV)

Impatience cost Moses the entrance into the Promised Land.

And then, very briefly, let's look at David. As a youth, anointed king, and yet for ten years or so he was persecuted and pursued by Saul, the reigning king. Twice he had an opportunity to kill Saul. His friends, his followers, said, "Kill him, this is the Lord's opportunity." But he refused. What would have caused him to kill Saul? Impatience. What restrained him from doing it? Patience. Eventually he came to the kingdom with God's blessing. He could have come to the kingdom another way but not with God's blessing. Now David has written his own comment on some of these things. For instance, in Psalm 40:1, he says:

> "I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, and heard my cry." (NAS)

What did he have to learn in those years of persecution? Waiting patiently for the Lord.

There's a New Testament comment on that situation, which I would like to close with. Romans 12:19:

> "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (NAS)

Notice the key phrase there, "leave room." Patience leaves room for God to intervene on our behalf and believe me He does a much better job on our behalf than we can do for ourselves.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow in my closing talk I'll give you some practical guidelines on how you may cultivate patience in your own life. 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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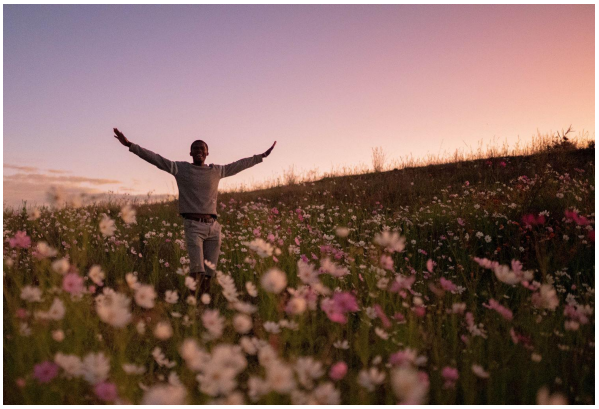

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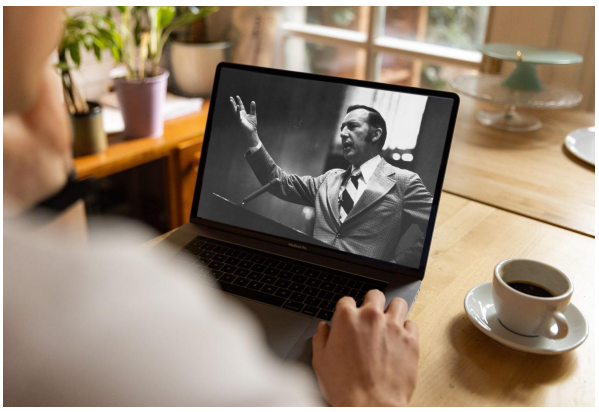

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