

SOMETHING GIVEN: PART 2

Last week we discussed how patience is a gift given by God that we should give to others. We challenged one another to not only practice patience, but to also think of it as "giving" patience to others. That lesson focused on our need for patience with one another. Mankind needs to be patient with one another. Today we'll continue to discuss patience. This patience centers on the need for it in relation to God. Probably not the best way to say it, but the need to be patient with God.

- **Psalm 40:1-5** I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. **Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust**, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! You have multiplied, O Lord my God, Your wondrous deeds and Your thoughts toward us; none can compare with You! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

David believed a man who trusts in God was a blessed man. But, a man who trusts in Him doesn't do so because or only when times are good. Take a look at the passage again and take note:

- **Psalm 40:1-5** I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me and heard my **cry**. He drew me up from the **pit of destruction**, out of the **miry bog**, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the **proud**, to those who go astray after a **lie**! You have multiplied, O Lord my God, Your wondrous deeds and Your thoughts toward us; none can compare with You! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

It's my deep conviction that God *allows* pain, suffering, doubt, trials, tribulations and testing to teach us to trust in Him. You've asked the question, for example, "Why the forbidden tree in Eden?" Did it not give Adam and Eve a *genuine* opportunity to trust in Him? When God cast them out - do you think that would drive a person to trust in Him more or less? Ever thought about that? One could say, "Well, look at what He did to them by casting them out. How could I trust someone like that?" Yet, another considers the same account and says, "If you've learned anything, you should have learned to trust Him. How much more should you trust Him while you live in a broken world?"

Evil Times

Do doubt about it. The world is broken. In fact, many people who believe in Jesus also believe He's not yet reigning, because the world is so evil. They believe it will be perfectly peaceful when He does. However, that doesn't hold water. If reigning as King demands peace, what do we do with the Father in the days of Noah? Was He not King?

Yes, God was King. He was also a very patient King at the time. Strange passage to reference when making an argument on the patience, yet . . .

- **Hebrews 11:7** By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.
- **1 Peter 3:18-20** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which He

went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

- **2 Peter 2:5, 9** if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

If we're struggling with the thought, "Why does God allow all of this to go unpunished", then remember passages like Genesis 6. Remember passages such as

- **Exodus 34:5-8** The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.
- We need to remember that God hasn't overlooked the sinful, yet, He is patient with the faithful (praise God!). This ALSO means that we need to leave vengeance to the Lord. As Paul reminded
- **Romans 12:19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
 - Many times we've forgotten this, so we step in to play God. Churches don't get involved in politics for a reason. We're out of our lane. We don't lean on government to be our moral compass either. We can let them do their part (punish or reward - Romans 13:1-7), but we lean on Him.
- This can be difficult - living in a world with sinful people, but Jesus did it. Paul did it. Could we say what Paul said (especially the last portion):
 - **Philippians 1:21-26** For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.
 - Would you stay put in order to encourage others? Any of you disappointed these days in what you see? Disappointed that God has returned yet? Ready to go home? I think we all get it. But, would you stay on behalf of others? Would you stay so that others can have hope and be reminded that God's Kingdom is superior?
 - **1 Timothy 1:16** But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.
 - **Romans 2:4** Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?
 - **2 Peter 3:8-10** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the

heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

- When Robert Ingersoll, the famous atheist, was lecturing, he once took out his watch and declared, "I will give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I have said." The minutes ticked off as he held the watch and waited. In about four-and-a-half minutes, some women began fainting, but nothing happened. When the five minutes were up, Ingersoll put the watch into his pocket. When that incident reached the ears of a certain preacher, Joseph Parker, he asked, "And did the gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of the Eternal God in five minutes?"

Unanswered Times

What about hardships in general? When things are uncertain, uneasy, scary, etc. Not so much people doing wrong, but things going wrong or uncertain? Remember the next "big" figure in the Bible after Noah? Abraham had a fun life, didn't he?

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

- We say that took faith! Amen. It also took patience. How long do I do this? Oh, my whole life? Don't get to see the promises come to fruition? Anyone else want to walk in his shoes?
- **Hebrews 6:12-15** so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.
- What if God told you, "What you're going through won't be realized in your life, but your kids, sorry, your great, sorry again, your great great (or is it your great great great grandkids?) will benefit from it." This thing you're wondering about. What if things don't happen when or how you'd like them to?
- Not only does He have to wait, but He has to stay faithful to God during some pretty uncertain situations.
 - **Hebrews 11:17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.
 - Do you think that was for Abraham or God? Did God not really know? Did this not prepare him and pull him closer to God?
 - **James 2:21-24** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith

was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" - and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Grace of God

Listen - whether it work, trials, illness or death, we have to trust in God and believe He knows best. "What if my spouse doesn't come to the Lord!" "What if I lose my job?" "What if my health fails me?" "What if my kids don't end up right?" His grace has to be sufficient.

- **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- What's a lack of patience going to get you? What's worrying going to do? What if God gave you the reigns. Would everything go well? Look at man's track record: we don't tend to do well when doing things our way. Do you need to know why? Is that fact that God allowed it sufficient? If we don't learn to trust in Him, then what have we really gained in this life? Do you really want total control? Listen, mankind isn't that impressive. I was told last week by a new doctor he could heal all these annoying physical complaints I have. If it does, then praise God. I'll be more comfortable. But, I've gotta tell you something: I'm still going to die. People are still going to stink. Jesus promises troubles in the world. That reality isn't going anywhere. Giving mankind the reigns isn't going to do it. Besides - God gives us much better gifts. Much better help. He gave us Jesus!
 - During World War II, following word that an only son had been killed in action, a priest was called to the home of grief-stricken parents. The father, pacing the floor, weeping, in anger demanded, "Where was God when my son was being killed?" Silence prevailed. Then the ministering priest replied, "I guess where He was when His Son was being killed." The calm, profound answer impacted the father, for it brought God out of remoteness into the circle of real life. Jones, G. C. (1986). 1000 illustrations for preaching and teaching (p. 147). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
 - **Hebrews 5:7-10** In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.
 - **Ecclesiastes 7:8** Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.