

I Want Patience - And I Want It Now!

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People who lack patience often seem to embody this statement. It brings up the contradiction: one must have patience to have patience. And whether we have godly patience or not can mean the difference between attaining God's Kingdom or the Second Death.

Because it is so vital to our Christian lives, let's look at four aspects of patience: what is it, why should we have it, what actions should we take while being patient, and how can we develop more patience?

The dictionary defines "patience" as displaying quiet endurance under stress or annoyance, tranquil while awaiting results, persevering. The Bible uses the word patience in two forms: *makrothumia*, patience with people; and *hupomone*, patience in trial.

In II Samuel 16:5-10, David exemplifies *makrothumia* by restraining his "mighty man" and nephew, Abishai, from removing Shimei's head. David realized that Shimei, a man from Saul's line, was caught up in the events occurring in Israel, and further considered that God might be involved in his actions.

Job's trial helps us to understand the meaning of *hupomone*. The Bible even refers to the patience of Job (James 5:11). Throughout his extended and tragic trial—in which he lost his children, his health and his riches—Job waited for God to answer his prayers. God's answer, though humbling to a man already beaten down, produced wonderful results.

Putting these two together, patience is calm endurance while under stress without the loss of self-control.

Why does God put such a high priority on patience? Patience sets a godly example for others. In this age of stress and instant expectations, our patience with others is a blazing beacon that draws people's attention.

Also, we need patience to build godly character:

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance [*hupomone*]; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:1-4).

Here, Paul informs us that patience is a foundational ingredient of godly character.

At times we may be tempted to take things into our own hands to relieve the pressure of a trial or an injustice, but God advises in Psalm 37:7, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass."

A term used in the business world today, proactive, means to take action to achieve right results! As we wait for God's answers to our problems, we should have a proactive attitude. The opposite of this would be "passive."

If you need a better job, do you ask God for it, just waiting for Him to provide it? Or do you ask, doing all you can to be prepared for it?

An older man, interviewing for a job, was asked how he was getting by. His response startled the interviewer. "I have a paper route with the Los Angeles *Times*," he replied. "I get up at 2:00 a.m., and my route is finished in time to take interviews. I'm currently making \$2,000.00 per month while I'm waiting." This man shows how to be proactive while looking for work.

Membership in God's church produces trials in our lives as God works with us, and as we strive to change and overcome. During these times, if we are not careful, we can confuse apathy with patience. God's people should always strive to be proactive, praying, fasting and studying to strengthen our foundations.

Focusing on God's plan will produce more patience. We need patience in understanding God's plan for us as individuals, as well as for the world (James 5:7-8). Keeping God's own patience with us foremost in mind will encourage us to be more patient ourselves.

How can the lack of patience keep you from the kingdom of God? In Luke 21 Jesus Christ lists the many events that will press upon us at the end time, and in verse 19 He says, "In your patience possess your souls." A literal translation of this verse is, "By your endurance you save your life!"

Developing patience is a quality we all need as the end hurtles closer. Just be patient as you're developing it!