

Passionate Patience

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Every now and then some experiences or thought triggers a song in my mind, and it takes an all-out effort to stop the music. It is the kind of thing that can be very annoying especially when you find yourself leaving a shopping center at Christmas time, one of the tunes of the artillery barrage just will not let go. Sometimes though, I am reminded of a tune that reminds of the sights and feelings of a pleasurable event into my mind, and even though it may be redundant, the reminiscing melody far outweighs the mild irritation of looped recording.

This happened to me a couple of months ago, when I began preparing this message. The song that started to repeat itself was “Have patience, have patience, don’t be in such a hurry, when you get impatient you only start to worry. Remember, remember that God is patient too and think of all times when all this had to wait for you.” Now that all of you have that tune bouncing around in your heads, I hope you can force yourselves to focus on the rest of the sermon.

That song always reminds me of two things: First is the very sentimental one, and practicing it with our children and then watching them and the other adorable little ones perform it for special music some thirty years ago. The second is a humorous anecdote that my friend Thierry Boyer tells in broken English and pantomime, about the time when many brethren in France had gathered for services on a particular Sabbath. The minister giving the sermon that day spoke on patience, but because of a series of interruptions and audio difficulties, the minister himself clearly showed to the whole congregation by the end of the sermon that his patience had run out.

As many of you know Thierry is a master of mimed characters and his expressive anecdote makes me laugh every time I think of it. But more

importantly it reminds me of the battle we all wage no matter who we are, of turning ourselves over to the sovereignty of God in every situation, and patiently waiting on His deliverance.

Perhaps this is the reason that God has made patience the primary or secondary subject in so many sermons, Bible studies, and articles that we have all heard or read over the years within the body of Christ. In the Church of The Great God alone there have been so many of these messages. To name just a few, John Reid's 1992 article entitled, "I Want Patience and I Want it Now," John Ritenbaugh's 1998 *Forerunner* Personal, "The Fruit of the Spirit: Patience." Martin Collins' sermons from 2005, "Patiently Waiting for Christ's Return" and "How Can We Develop True Patience?" Richard Ritenbaugh's 2011 sermon, "Seeking God's Will and Patience." And finally, two fine messages from Martin and Richard a couple of weeks ago over Pentecost weekend, which dealt indirectly and directly with patience. I might add they both tested my patience as I squirmed in my seat, knowing that this was the subject that I would be speaking on two weeks in.

These are but a few of the many just in the Church of The Great God and does not even begin to count all those in the other churches of God, not to mention all the self-help speeches, articles, and the like given to the world outside the body of Christ, that recognize the value of this virtue.

For most of the world patience usually boils down to the pithy tongue and cheek saying by former Prime Minister of England Margret Thatcher, which Martin used in his 2005 sermon, where he quoted her saying, "I am extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way in the end." How true is it for brethren, even for many of us called into the body of Christ, this carnal mindset is a major factor destroying the unity of the spirit which can only be unified by patiently waiting together on God's way to the end.

Today I want to approach the subject from a slightly different direction, that is from the letters of continued patience to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. This subject is so important that the Lamb of God made it a binding thread woven into the messages to all seven churches, even though it does not seem to be directly addressed to each one of them. It is there. However, in most of the letters it is being addressed as a lack of godly patience.

Before we go any further, I want us to look at a few very familiar scriptures that will be used as a foundation for what we need to see today. We are going to read them without any comments, and then look at the basic principles they teach us.

Genesis 3:14-19 So the Lord God said to the serpent; “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life, both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

Romans 8:5-10 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectations of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the Son of God. For the creation was subjected to futility not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies, for we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, and why does one hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

John 17:14-19 [Jesus Christ prayed] “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

John 15:9-10 [Christ address the disciples] “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

John 15:12-14 “This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

John 15:16-21 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

I Peter 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

I Peter 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

From the very beginning following the vicious seduction of Satan, sin physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually has been the course of hardship throughout this world. The spirit of this world is enmity against God. The world hates God, and even though most of those in the world do

not see it this way, the whole world, the whole creation groans with the pangs of the futility from moral decay that began in the Garden and will continue until the return of Jesus Christ.

God tells us through the apostle Paul in Romans 8, that he purposefully pronounced the curse on the creation in the hope of the revealing of His Son, and through this process the deliverance from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of His children.

Furthermore, Paul makes this sure statement, as recorded in Romans 8:22-25, that this is something that Paul should not only clearly understand, but through faith eagerly participated with a passionate, persevering patience.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all the lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

From this final chapter of Paul's words to the Ephesian church, while keeping in mind that Jesus Christ's prayer to His Father during the evening before His ultimate sacrifice for us, regarding the disposition of His disciples in this world that He placed them in, but not to be part of it.

Revelation 1:17-20 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

Revelation 2:1 “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things says He who holds the seven stars in the His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”

Brethren, in light of all these scriptures that we have looked at, I would like us to look at this, and these words to the churches in their actual context. Our passionately caring Commander, who is never outside of the midst of His command, on the front lines, who is zealously leading His troops to the field of battle, He has already conquered, He stands there within the midst of the churches. He is giving His field commanders instructions and directions to follow which He has guaranteed to be successful through Himself, saying, “Fear not, I am the first to finish the battle and the last to leave the field, leaving no man behind. Just move ahead with the same passionate patience, that I have been moving through the mine fields I show you. Holding on to Me and one another with passionate patience, and we cannot fail.”

Notice how many times He says He knows everything about all His troops. I know your works, your labor, your patience, your discriminating temperament toward evil, your proofing of teachers, your trials, tribulations, poverty, suffering, holding fast even in the face of death, charity, service, hanging on by a thread to the truth.

The perfect Commander also knows with absolute surety, and points His elect to the things that will bring hardship upon those being perfected through a process much longer and intense than any one individual life.

Through these directions and with our understanding now, that these messages probably existed in a number of different levels, we should be able to see that whether they are eras passing the baton, one to the other over thousands of years, simultaneous churches of God at the end time where instructions are to be taken as a whole, personally over the course of each member's life within the body of Christ. There is a very important piece that runs one end to the other, that piece is passionate patience.

With the foundation of the verses we read at the beginning of this message, we know that the elect are still in a world that is wrapped in toil and trouble, with a carnal mind that is enmity against God. To the carnal, patiently waiting on God's ways of doing things is not the answer, because as Jeremiah 17, tells us the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

The problem is in the whole body of Christ today, the seven churches, and each member individually is still subject to the deceit of the carnal mind, unless we have a passionate relationship with the One who's right hand is on each of us, individually, encouraging us to patiently have no fear because He is the First and the Last, and will leave no one behind who patiently does it His way.

Brethren, do you know why our Commander In Chief is so passionate in these two chapters about His hate for the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, Balaam, Jezebel, and all those other philosophies that the deceitful heart of the carnal mind comes up with? Because they lead away from the only way to victory through a passionate relationship with Him.

I John 4:1-21 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world,

and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed that love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.

Brethren, this is what the one who is the First and the Last reminds us, passionately abiding together in His love is the only way. The only thing that the doctrines and the philosophies of this world are going to do is separate us into camps of self-righteous stoicism or liberal excess. Our duty is to have the passionate patience to learn to abide in Him together.

What we can see from the line that runs through the messages of these seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, is that tolerance for the carnal mind set within ourselves, no matter what our works may be, it only leads to an apathetic form of patience, as opposed to the passion of our first love. Ultimately that apathy will bring us back to a contempt within a beggarly element of this world.

According to *Webster's Encyclopedia Dictionary*, apathy is from the Greek, *a pathos*. It can be literally translated "away from suffering." It is defined as a want of feeling, privation of passion, emotion, or excitement. Its synonyms are indifference, carelessness, listlessness, insensibility. This as opposed to passionate patience, is what we see leading back to the beggarly elements of the carnal mind and the proud boasting of being rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing.

Among the antonyms from the word apathy, is a word I found very appropriate to this sermon today. The word is assiduity, and it literally means "to sit close." It is defined as constant in application, attentive, devoted, unremitting, performed with constant diligence or attention. Are we drawing as close as we can with unremitting patience to the one who wants to pull us to Him with His right hand so that we are assured not to fear, because He is the First and the Last? Are we together abiding in Him and His way of life and His way of love? Or are we letting the beggarly elements of our lives, before our first love blossoms, drag us away from Him and each other?

The One who remains amid the elect reminds us over and over through these messages to His churches, and specifically to those who abide with Him in passionate patience. "I will give to thee of the Tree of Life." "I will give you the crown of life," "I will give some of the hidden manna to eat." "I will give them a white stone with a new name written on it." "I will give you power over nations," "I will give you what I also have received from My Father." "I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life" "I will confess His name before My Father." "I will write on him the name of My God," and "I will write on him My new name." "I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

Brethren, are we allowing a tolerance for philosophies of this world to proceed from the carnal mind to separate us from the One who is the First and the Last, because it is easier than suffering through those things which are the hallmark of the children of God, who eagerly, passionately wait in patient perseverance?

Romans 8:28-39 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according

to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Brethren, nothing can separate us from the love of God if our hope and our work is in a passionately patient relationship with Jesus Christ, whose right hand is always on us.

Revelation 1:9 (The Living Bible) It is I, your brother John, a fellow sufferer for the Lord's sake, writing this letter to you. I too have shared the patience Jesus gives, and we share his Kingdom!

Because together in joy inexpressible, we look to Him, who is the First and the Last, with His passionate patience.