

# Patience – The Forgotten Key

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I am using a very expensive telephone over here in the UK, and also I believe that we are on the exclusive moderator line. One of the benefits of this particular telephone line is that not only can I speak on it and hear the USA, but also it does allow me to smell what is happening in the former colonies. This being very early in the morning, at least in most parts of the USA, I can actually test by breathing in whether anybody has been eating ham and eggs this morning. I am pleased to say that I detect no ham and egg smells.

Really the question of being able to hear people and to smell different scents does remind us that we are, all of us, human beings. If you are not a human being listening to this message, then perhaps you are in the wrong place. But I think that we are all human beings; we have eyes, ears, a tongue, hands and so on, and we very much do live in a physical world.

We are familiar with houses built of timber and stone and brick. We have seen factories and perhaps worked with machines in them. We drive cars or have been driven in cars. We have TV sets, microwaves, refrigerators. It is a physical world that we dwell in, and in this physical world, we do rely very, very much on our five physical senses, such as hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, and so on.

We have to admit that these various senses are absolutely vital if we want to live safely and happily and healthily. They are good and proper. For example, if you wanted to drive a car, but you were blind, it would be rather difficult if you could not see other motorists, if you could not see whether traffic lights were red or green. You would be a hazard to yourself and to other people. You need to have good eyes and be able to rely on the sense of sight if you want to drive safely.

It is rather amusing what I read in a newspaper yesterday of a new record that has just been set here in Great Britain, which is of a driver, actually a lady driver, who managed to drive down a slip road

onto one of our big motorways going the wrong way. She managed to drive a total of thirty miles the wrong way down a one-way motorway with all the traffic, petrol tankers, cars, vehicles coming the opposite way. It is amazing that nobody was actually killed. This lady set a new record. Nobody else has managed thirty miles before, until the police finally managed to stop her. She allegedly said that she thought everybody else was going the wrong way! That is quite amazing!

So eyesight is very important, and so is hearing. If you were out stalking through the jungle looking for something to shoot, and you did not hear a lion padding along behind you, you could get into serious trouble.

So we know that our senses are absolutely important to us, **but** one of the problems that we may have is that we are so **close**, most of us, to this material world, to this physical world around us, and we are so, perhaps at times, completely, totally, 100 percent reliant on our five physical senses, that sometimes we think that that is all there is.

Of course, in this world, there are some people who do precisely think that that is all there is. There are atheists who don't believe that there is a God and don't believe that there is a spirit world. There are evolutionists who think that we all descended from some slime in a pool of algae one billion years ago. There are people who don't bother thinking anything, who assume that what they see, hear, and taste is all there is.

I think we do know that the world that we see and hear and touch isn't the whole story. There is actually a very real spirit world. There are angels, God's messengers, that, by-and-large, we don't see. There is Satan and there are Satan's many, many demons that perhaps we are rather grateful that we don't see or come across. Because we don't see them, or perhaps we just forget about them, we often, perhaps, tend to look at situations, look at circumstances, approach

difficulties in a very purely, natural, carnal, material worldly way.

If Jesus Christ were to walk up to a circumstance or situation, I am fairly sure that He would look at it from a different perspective than you or I, because most of us, probably most of the time, would rely on what we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears, what we can reach out and touch. But that is not the whole picture. There is, I am sure we would all admit, a missing dimension, and that is where the subject of faith comes in.

Faith is a very Godly attribute which we have looked at a number of times in the past, and faith is a Godly attribute that we all of us need to develop.

Let's open our Bibles to II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 7, a short verse but very full of meaning. **7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.** We walk **not** by sight, not by our physical eyes. We **should** walk by faith and not by sight.

There are many circumstances and situations when, if we rely on what we see, if we have a very natural view or outlook of a situation or a circumstance, then it may well send us off the track, because, says Paul, we are a people who are to walk by faith, not necessarily by what we see.

We don't rely on our sight if, for example, it disagrees with what God says in His Word. In any contest between God's Word, God's promises, and what we see, what we hear, what we feel, then it should, in fact, be **no** contest. We would go with God's Word. We would walk by faith irrespective of what we see. That could be, for example, something like a healing.

You may have gone to God saying, "God, You have promised to heal me. I am going to hold You to that promise." Then perhaps it doesn't **feel** like you are healed, or the lump or bump is still visible. What would you do in that situation? Would you rely on God's Word or make decisions based on what

you **see**? It tells us here that we walk by **faith, not** by sight.

Let's turn to Hebrews 11, verse 1.

Hebrews 11 is the famous faith chapter, but we want verse 1 only. I just want to highlight first of all the fact that our physical senses are **at times** a problem to us - not when you are driving your car. Don't drive your car by faith; drive your car by sight! But when there is a contest or a conflict between what we see and hear and think, and what God's Word says, then ***I Now faith is*** (so that means that this is now a *definition* - faith IS the following --) ***the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*** - something that is **not seen**, something that is not visible to our natural eyesight.

Faith is the evidence, the absolute proof, if you like, of something you cannot see. Therefore, if you want to go by what your eyes tell you, you wouldn't have faith because, "I can't see anything there. I am looking at this situation and I can see nothing. There is nothing to be seen. Therefore, I will rely on the evidence of my eyes and I will have no belief."

But verse 1 tells us that faith is the evidence of things which are **not** seen. So part of our development, our growth as sons and daughters of the living God, our maturing as strong Christians, is that we should be acquiring more of God's way of thinking.

We start off with our natural mind and as babies and little toddlers we tend to be extremely selfish. Most babies are extraordinarily selfish little beasts, but as we grow up we realize that that makes us rather unattractive to our peers, so we finally learn to hide our selfishness and our greed and become a bit more mature.

But we should actually be growing way beyond that, to acquire a Godly outlook, a Godly perspective, and I can assure you that God walks by faith and not by sight. If God walked by sight as many of us walked for a while, He would turn His back on us and walk off, because the Laodicean era, as was touched upon in the sermonette, is a pretty disgraceful era. It is one that made Jesus Christ virtually vomit it out of His mouth, but God sees the end. Even though it is not seen

physically, God has confidence and faith in the end result. He walks and lives by faith and so should you and I.

As important as faith is, and I know that I have spoken on it quite a number of times before, there is one key ingredient which, if it is missing, is likely to cause our faith to fail, and it is this missing ingredient that I want to talk about today, and that is the forgotten key of patience.

I have titled this message, if you like sermon titles, "Patience - The Forgotten Key", because hopefully as we go through the next few verses you will see that, with patience, we should be successful. Without patience, and by that I mean what the Bible teaches patience to be, then our faith can fail and we can fail, and we certainly do not want to do that.

So let's turn to James, chapter 1 and get into the topic of Patience - The Forgotten Key. ***2 ¶ My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,...*** which usually causes our minds to go "Tilt!" Call it Joy? It is the most miserable thing in the world, isn't it, to fall into any trial, let alone various trials. ***3 ... knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*** Now here we can see in one verse that faith and patience are associated. They are linked together and we see that quite a number of times.

I heard it once referred to as, "Faith and patience are the twins." You generally find faith and patience going hand-in-hand because without patience, the faith will probably fail, and you do need them both.

Notice here that the testing of your faith doesn't produce **more** faith. I have heard from time to time people say, "These tests and trials are strengthening my faith." Not exactly accurate. The testing of our faith produces **patience**.

What the Bible means by patience isn't just putting up with something and whining and moaning all the way. In the human realm that might be the case. A man might think that his wife drives him to distraction, but he is patient with her. He puts up with her, and she annoys him and he is bad tempered, but he just puts up with it year in and year out because he is patient. Well, that is not quite what the Bible has in mind by "patience."

In a Bible sense, patience means to be constant and not to deviate. In a Biblical sense, if you are patient, it means that you have set your course, you are plowing on, and you are going to remain on that course. You are going to be constant. You are going to continue. You will not deviate to the left; you will not swerve to the right. You have set your decision; you have chosen your path and you will remain on it. You will continue on that path irrespective of what happens around you. You are constant. You are steadfast. You endure. You are patient.

***4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect (or mature) and complete, lacking nothing.*** How would you and I like to be perfect, or spiritually mature, strong? This tells us that we can do that. Let patience, or endurance, or perseverance, or this constancy have its perfect work that you may be, or become, mature or complete, lacking in nothing at all.

If we understand this verse, it is telling us that through the occasional trials that come our way, where our faith is exerted and occasionally tested, if we learn to be constant and do not deviate but stand firm and steadfast, then it says we will become mature and complete, lacking nothing.

On the topic of patience, Thayer's Lexicon defines it as follows: patience - the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith by even the greatest trials.

So faith is that characteristic that says, "I am going this way. I have set my mind and I am **not** moving. I will not be budged. It doesn't matter what happens around me. It doesn't matter too much about the circumstances, whether they change. I have made my decision and I am holding fast to it. I am patient; I am continuing. I will not be moved by what I see; I will not be moved by what I hear; I will not be moved by what I touch, feel or taste because I am walking by faith in God's unchangeable Word. And since it does not change and I am standing on that, I will not change." We know that is the way that Jesus lives. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and will be forever. He sets His mind and He is not

moved to the left or the right by changing circumstances because He walks by faith.

Carrying on in James, chapter 1 **5 If any of you lacks wisdom...** And when we are hitting certain circumstances in our family lives, perhaps in our work place, perhaps in our health, finances, wherever it might be, it is quite often the case that we don't quite know what best to do. That is fine. We don't have all the answers, but we do have a God who **does** have all the answers and it says here, that if any of you lacks wisdom about these particular various trials that you have fallen into **...let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it (the wisdom) will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**

Now is a wave of the sea constant? Does it continue? Does it keep on the path? Does it not deviate? The answer is obvious. The wave is all over the place, It blows one way and then it blows the other way, and then it is tossed up into the air and scattered into droplets and foam and froth.

**7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.** That is a picture of somebody who is not patient, because patient means that you continue unswerving, not deviating, not being moved, not budging. You have made your decision based upon what God says; and the evidence of your eyes, your ears, what people tell you, what you feel makes no difference because you are a single-minded person.

Here it tells us that if you ask in faith and you don't have that patient constancy so that you are blown one way one day and then blown the other way the next day, then it says, "you are unstable in all your ways and let not that man, or that woman, suppose that he or she will receive **anything** from the Lord.", because God wants us to stand in faith and to continue patiently, in faith, constant and not deviating.

It is quite easy sometimes, in the spur of the moment, to go to God and perhaps ask Him for something in prayer and find a

promise which we can stand on, and sometimes in the excitement, we stand on that promise and say, "Yes, that is it! We are the Rock of Gibraltar. We are going to stand firm in faith. Amen, brother. I am not going to be moved by what I see or hear."

For an hour that faith might be pushed out there and we are standing strong in faith, but two or three days later, when nothing has happened and in fact the situation may be worse – "Well, perhaps God is not going to answer me this time. "Well, I guess perhaps I am the exception to the rule." Or, "Well, after all, it didn't work for so-and-so, and I guess it won't work for me either." Then, the faith that we had, no longer continues. Our constancy of believing suddenly is wavering. We are like the little wave in the sea. We start to blow one way, and then a day later, "No, no. I am quite convinced that God meant what He said and I am going to stand in faith. Amen, brother. I am back strong in faith." Then a day later, "But then again, perhaps God didn't rally mean it after all..." That sort of scenario where we blow hot and cold on the same day is not holding fast in patience!

Drop down to verse 12 in James, chapter one. It tells us **12 Blessed** (which means happy or loaded with benefits) **is the man who endures temptation;** (or tests or trials) **for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.** So you have to, it says here, "endure temptation." One who remains patient, remains constant, who doesn't give up because of a test or a trial. Because his health may deteriorate, that doesn't mean that he gives up on God's promises. Because his finances temporarily take a knock, doesn't mean that he suddenly disbelieves that God is a provider of security.

The man, or the woman, who endures temptation, who remains constant, irrespective of circumstances does so because God's Word doesn't change.

If our faith is based upon what God's Word says, then the **circumstances** around us must change. God's Word will not change and we can stand **absolutely** sure and steadfast on the fact that God's

promises are sure. They are steadfast and **they** will always win over circumstances.

It tells us here that when we have done that, when we have patiently endured, we will receive the crown of life. That is a royal, kingly award.

"The crown of life. " That is talking of eternal life. That is talking of sharing in the governing of the entire universe, the crown of eternal life for those of us who remain constant, on course, and continue, who are not pushed to one side or the other by circumstances.

Let's turn to the fifth chapter of James and read verses 7 and 8. **Therefore be patient, brethren,** (Same book, same author, and he is advising them, instructing them to be patient.) **until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.**

You know that when a farmer plants his crops in the springtime, for example, he can't keep jumping and changing his mind. He can't plant March or April and then go out in May and dig them up again and find out what's going on and decide, "Well, I'm not sure I really wanted wheat...maybe tomatoes...I don't know about this...Perhaps I should...." He can't **do** that.

The farmer sees the outcome in his mind. He can't see the harvest with his eyes physically, but he knows that if he sows the seed and waits patiently and remains constant and doesn't stop and change his mind and take different courses of action, if he just waits patiently, then at the end of due season, he will reap the harvest. It is guaranteed. He can see that in his mind's eye. He can see it in a human, logical sense. God's promises are much the same.

**Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...** or until the coming of His particular promise, if that is what you are relying on. **See how the farmer waits...** He waits and doesn't get agitated because he has to wait.

There is nothing wrong with **waiting** for God's promises. In that waiting period is when we hold fast to our faith. That is

when our faith is often most tested, when we are waiting, and waiting. That is when the human mind starts to doubt and to wonder and to, perhaps, give up. That is when we have to then rely on this quality, this characteristic of patience, which means that we do not swerve, we do not deviate. We have made a decision and we stick with it. We are constant, as it says here,... *waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.*

**8** *You also be patient. Establish your hearts,* (settle it in your mind) *for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* Or the coming of the promise, if that is what we are dealing with. But establish your hearts; settle it in your mind.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways! We don't want to be unstable. We want to be established. And that just means to realize how important the quality of patience, constancy, endurance, is to us.

Let's turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 6, verses 11-15. *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,* So there is something that we have to do here, all the way until the end, so that obviously implies that we don't give up part of the way there. You don't run the marathon and give up after 21 miles and reach the end.

**12** *that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* So again we can see that faith and patience are absolutely linked together. It is like the husband and wife. You need the two to be complete. You need faith **and** patience, not faith on its own.

Faith is great, but without patience, your faith can falter and fail. "With patience" which is like a foundation for your faith or undergirds your faith, you can keep your faith out there as **long** as it takes, all the way to the end, all the way to inheriting the promises, because patience will keep your faith alive **all** the time.

Notice verse 12 says, "that you do not **become** sluggish." That is a warning, isn't it? You can't become sluggish unless you were active and zealous to start with.

The danger all the way through the book of Hebrews is that they were becoming sluggish. They were drifting away from what was true and we should not do that. **13** *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely (Abraham) blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he (Abraham) had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.* Some translations say "patiently waited."

So God managed to convince Abraham because God actually swore on Himself, swore on His own self. **17** *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation* (or encouragement), *who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

That is quite a long sentence. Paul was good at those, but basically, verse 17 is telling us why our faith should stay out there, unaltered. The reason? Because God has sworn by Himself.

It tells us there in verse 18, "by two immutable things." Immutable means "doesn't change." Two immutable, unchanging things. The first is God's Word. If God says it, it is true. If God says it, it will come to pass. God cannot lie. If God says it, **it is going to happen.** You can bet your bottom dollar; if God says it, that's the way it is!

But to make it even easier for us to believe God, He actually took an oath upon Himself! Now he had God's Word, which is good enough, frankly, backed up by God's oath. That is like two things that cannot be broken.

So because God has made it abundantly clear that His Word is to be relied upon, therefore we can have faith, therefore we can remain patient, therefore we can wait quietly for God's promises, because it is impossible for God to lie!

Turn to Romans, chapter 15 **4** *For whatever things were written before* (that would be, in this case, the Old Testament scriptures, by and large) *were written for our learning, that we through the*

*patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

**5** ¶ *Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus ...* So here in verses 4 and 5 it tells us what we know already from other places, that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

We develop our faith. We can increase our faith by reading and pondering and studying the things that were written before for our learning, as it says in verse 4, "whatever things were written before."

The scriptures were written for us to learn from, and much of our learning is learning and developing faith as we read through and think about what God did in the past, what He has promised, what His Word says, "that we through the patience..." that the scriptures produce. It says in verse 5 "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you..." The New American Standard Bible says, "May the God who **gives** perseverance (or patience and encouragement)... because God is the One who will supply this to us.

You and I may not have, humanly, great patience. There are some people, and you have met them and I have met them, who are, humanly, just naturally, very tolerant people. Not much really disturbs them. Hurricane Frances can come tearing over them, the bottom can drop out of the stock market, the car can spring an oil leak, the house can burn down and they are not overly fussed. These people are very tolerant and very patient, "Not to worry. Things will be better tomorrow."

Of course, there are other people who are highly inflammatory. The slightest little spark of dissent and they blow up like an atom bomb. They are extraordinarily **impatient** people!

So if we are lacking in Godly patience, and to some extent, I guess, we would have to admit that most of us are not yet perfect in the level of constancy, endurance, patience, then, it says ... "may the God who **gives** perseverance and patience make you like-minded..." So we can go to God for this, but recognize that the scriptures are a major part of where we develop our faith **and** our patience.

If we turn to Hebrews, chapter 3, we can see this in action, starting in verse 12. Here is where Paul, if he was the writer of Hebrews, is referring to things previously written down for our learning **12 Beware, brethren,**(This is common to Hebrews, these continuous warnings that crop up from chapter to chapter) **lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**...So, I guess, if you re departing through unbelief, then your faith has failed. You are no longer remaining constant. You are no longer continuing in the way you should go. **13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.** **14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,**

So we may begin properly, and we should begin with confidence, but it is important that that confidence does not run out, that it remains, as it says here, steadfast to the end. We have to keep it going. **15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."** There is something written down in the past for our learning, our admonition. **16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?** **17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?** **18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?** **19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.** Their faith failed.

In their case, some of the lessons we can learn, and we often cover these at Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread time, is that they saw all those marvelous miracles. They saw Egypt destroyed, they saw the plagues, they walked through the Red Sea on dry land and dry foot. They saw miracle after miracle. They saw the manna every day, but their faith failed because they did not continue steadfast. The patience wasn't there and they failed to continue and therefore, as it says there, they finally did not go into the Promised Land. They failed to enter their kingdom.

If we turn to Luke, chapter 8, we will look at one of Jesus' parables where explained

somewhat about this. This is the parable of the sower who sowed the seed, one of the key parables, probably **the** most important of all the parables.

**9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"**

(Because they couldn't understand it. It wasn't made to be understood by just the average listener.) **10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'**

**11 "Now the parable is this: ...** So Jesus proceeds to give them the meaning of the parable. **The seed is the word of God.** Whether the Word of God is the Good News preached to people who have never heard it before or whether it is the Word of prosperity, the Word of good health, the Word of peace of mind, the Word of assurance, the Word of correction and rebuke, whatever it might be, it is the Word of God.

**12 "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.**

**13 "But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.** Oh dear! These people believe only for a while, for a day, a month, a year, but eventually temptation, test, trial comes along. The patience, the continuance, the constancy is not there and they fall away.

**14 "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** They may start off well, but they, too, do not continue constant on course. They get distracted and turned away.

**15 "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.** "Keep it" means really hold it fast. These people hear the Word, which might be a particular promise of God that they are relying on, and they keep it and hold it fast and bear fruit with patience.

The fruit tree doesn't bear fruit the day after you plant the seed. You have to wait some time for a tree to bear its apples, and so on. The fruit takes some time, but if you wait and you believe, you will see fruit on that tree.

It is the same with us. The seed is the good seed. God's promises are pretty good promises. God's Word is reliable and if we don't get distracted and choked with the cares and the riches and pleasures of life, if we don't yield to temptation, and testing, and doubts and so on, if we hold fast and if we continue, as it says there, with patience, with constancy, just keep on going, keep on believing, not moved by what we see around us or hear around us, but saying, "No. I have God's Word on this. God's Word of truth. God cannot lie. I don't care what the situation looks like around me. I am not going to trust in my eyes, or my ears, what people tell me, what their words are. I have God's word here." If we do that, it says with a noble and good heart, an upright heart, a heart that trusts in its Creator, then we will bear fruit, with patience.

Let's turn to Hebrews, chapter 10. You have to keep on going to bear fruit. You occasionally see, even in natural life, people who are very patient. You probably know of men who put up with difficult wives and, of course, we will have to imagine wives who put up with difficult men in their lives and do a pretty good job of sticking with it through thick and thin. A great example of natural patience.

One example I can think of at the moment. As yet the fruit has not been borne. I am not sure, frankly, that it ever will be. There is a girl whom I worked with up to a couple or three years ago. She has now left the company that I am employed by, but this girl, I reckon, will be in the Guinness Book of Records someday because she has been engaged to be married to one man for over thirty years! I reckon that she is one of the most patient individuals you will come across (or possibly stupid) because to wait thirty years for a man, frankly, is an awfully long time. He is no longer the vigorous young man with dark hair like when she first got engaged to be married. He is now not that way at all. In her case I would

recommend, perhaps, a shotgun to march him down the aisle!

So patience is a quality which we can see the physical illustration of, but with Godly examples it far more powerful, far more potent than human patience.

Hebrews 10:35 **Therefore do not cast away your confidence**, (your faith, your belief) **which has great reward**. There is for all of us a tremendous reward coming. In a minor sense it might be the answer to various prayers we have before God at the moment, or healing, or financial blessing, or peace of mind or whatever, but on the bigger scene we are talking about eternal life as king-priests in the world tomorrow. So there is fantastic reward, great reward if we don't cast away, don't give up, just keep on keeping on.

**36 For you have need of endurance**, (or patience) **so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise**: There can be a time element here. Like the farmer waiting for the harvest, it can be a while before the fruit appears. You have need of endurance, or patience, or constancy, so that after you have done the will of God - which means, among other things, believing, having faith - you may receive the promise.

**37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.**

**38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."**

**39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition**, (or destruction) **but of those who believe to the saving of the soul**. Here we can see living by faith and having this patient endurance all lumped together in one passage.

I think most of you who tuned in last time to the Book of Habakkuk Bible study spent some time looking at this quotation here. Verses 37 and 38 come from Habakkuk, chapter 2 and are very much a key principle.

"The just shall live by his faith," but notice the implication here about not "drawing back". To draw back when you have put faith out there, to shrink back, as one translation has it, means that you have failed to keep going in patience. You are

no longer constant. That is what patience means.

You are no longer constant if you shrink back, if you draw back, if you start to get discouraged, if you give up. You need to be faithful, which means to exert the faith and then hold to it and remain constant.

Let's turn to Galatians, chapter 6. I'd remind you that we are looking at holding fast, at continuing, at being constant, at not giving up, at not swerving or deviating once we have made a decision, in faith.

To keep that faith effective, we need to keep it going and not move. **7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**<sup>8</sup> **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.** (Or any other promise that we are relying on) **9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.**

So that is all about remaining steadfast, and continuing and being patient because there is a season when the blessings, the promises, the benefits will come. But if we give up beforehand, if we think, "Well, this is not working. I have been anointed for this situation. It's not doing what I want it to do." Or "I'm losing heart. I'm discouraged. This financial problem has been dogging me for eighteen months now. I have tried hard. I have taken it to God and I have fasted over it. I'm sure that I have His words from the Bible and I am sure that I expected something to happen, but it has been **so** long now. I think I'll just give up and try something else. I'll get a bank loan. That will help me."

It says here in verse 9, "Don't grow weary." Why does Paul say that? Because he knows that humanly we will grow weary. There will come a point after, maybe a couple or three hours for some of us of standing in faith. Even the strongest person of faith, if things are not happening or things are getting **worse** and time passes and time passes, then we start to have our doubts.

Really, we should always doubt our doubts, "Believe our beliefs" and "doubt our doubts", but humanly, we don't.

Paul says here, don't **grow weary while doing good**, (and belief in God is, by the way, doing good) **for in due season** (in the fullness of time) **we shall reap if we do not lose heart**. One translation says, "If we do not get discouraged..."

The King James says, "If we faint not..." That is one of the troubles. You can start off in faith, that is all very well, but it is not starting the race that counts but finishing the race! If you don't keep patient, if you don't keep constant, then even the greatest faith, if it lasts only three minutes, may not be quite good enough.

Let's turn to II Corinthians, chapter 4. This is all part of renewing our minds because we do start off life with very much, quite understandably, quite properly, a physical outlook, a natural outlook.

We live, we make judgments, we make decisions based on what we see, what we hear. We drive our cars, so on and so forth, based upon our eyes and our hearing, and so on. That is great, but when we come to living in the Godly realm, when we are trying to renew our minds to think like God thinks, then that requires us, very often, to walk by faith and **not** rely on our senses.

Once we start walking by faith then we need to always remember - "faith and patience". They go together like the horse and cart, like the husband and wife. One without the other is incomplete, so when we want to stand by faith and walk by faith, let's always at the back of our minds think immediately-patience, constancy, unswerving, single minded, and so on.

One of the reasons that we do deviate is because we do take our eyes off the invisible and we do tend to focus on what we see, and if that disagrees with God's Word, we should stop there and then and choose to go with God's Word.

Unless we are vigilant, then out of our experience, we very often will go by what we see, and at that point our faith perhaps could falter. II Corinthians 4:16 **Therefore** (says Paul) **we do not lose**

**heart.** We just read about that, didn't we? "If we don't get weary and don't lose heart, don't faint, don't get discouraged." "Therefore," says Paul, "we shouldn't lose heart." *Even though our outward man is perishing* (or decaying would be a better term there), *yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

And of course, that should be true. We are aging physically, on the outside. Some of us may wear rose-tinted spectacles, but even the deepest rose-tinted spectacles can't hide the truth when you look in the mirror in the morning. Unless you are somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five or so, then the wrinkles are there and gravity is having its effect on our bodies. We are decaying. We can't hide it. It is just the way the cookie crumbles. But whether we are thirty or forty or sixty or eighty or ninety-five, our inward man, or inward woman, should actually be stronger, fitter, the older we are. The longer we have been going God's way, the better we should be inwardly.

**17 For our light affliction** (This is Paul speaking. He knew a thing or two about affliction.), *which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* I want some of that. I mean, would you like an eternal weight of glory? I think I would! - glory, - eternal life, - immortality, - helping to govern the world, - able to visit the planets, stars, galaxies, - to meet with angels, - to meet with Noah and Moses and King David and fellowship with them for eternity! What a future! It's an eternal weight of glory.

But all of this works only if we comply with verse 18, *while we do not look at the things which are seen...* Notice that. We do **not** look at the things which are seen. We don't focus on them. That is not what is driving our decisions, our planning, our thoughts, *but at the things which are not seen.* How can you do that? I think I have spoken before on the "Eye of Faith". You have to look at things "not seen" with a separate bunch of eyeballs! *For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

When it says that things which are seen are temporary, it means that they are all

subject to change. If you believe in God for something that you clearly see in the scriptures, and circumstances seem to contradict that, well, things that you can see with your physical, naked eyes are temporary. They are **all** subject to change, and frankly, God will change everything if He has to, for His Word to remain true, because God **cannot** lie. His Word is established forever, in every situation, every circumstance, every natural, temporal, physical thing. God will change everything, turn it all upside down if He has to, for His Word to remain true.

What He is looking for in you and me is that we have some confidence in His Word and take Him **at** His Word. When we do that, we have to keep on going, keep that faith going.

Let's turn to II Peter, chapter one. (You don't normally finish services there in America until about 4 p.m., so I guess there is plenty of time yet to go before you normally finish? So even though I have another 42 scriptures here, that shouldn't perhaps disturb you too much?!) Ok, II Peter chapter one and we'll start in verse two. This is a tricky book because it sort of just goes ... you can start off and it just runs, and races, all the way through to the end of chapter three. We'll have to stop somewhere! I think I will start in verse two, chapter 1

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,<sup>3</sup> as His divine power has given to us all things (all things!) that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises,... Promises – plural! That sounds pretty interesting! Has God given all things to us that we need for life, as well as godliness? Verse 4 says not just precious promises. That would be pretty good, to give us precious promises, but He gives us **exceedingly great** and precious promises... *that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature* (that is changing our minds as well from the natural to the supernatural outlook), *having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

**5 ¶ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence** (That means you have got to do some work now. You have to be diligent.), *add to your faith virtue..* So here is faith mentioned again.

It then lists a number of things which we will go through in a moment. The Greek seems to imply that each one of these, sort of, almost leads to the next. It is not like they are all completely independent, like an apple, plus a motorcar, plus a bus, plus an airplane, plus an orange, plus a pecan nut or something. They are not all disassociated. With these, it is like one leads you, almost, to the next one, like they go hand-in-hand.

*... add to your faith virtue,* That appears to be energy, zeal if you like, for doing good things. "...Add to your faith..." or "through your faith produce..." this virtue or energy... ,

*..... to virtue* (or through virtue) *knowledge,* (Obviously if you are energetic enough, you can acquire the knowledge.)

**6 to knowledge self-control,** (and then by that means) *to self-control* (then produce) *perseverance,* (or patience, constancy)

*... to perseverance godliness,*

**7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and** (then, if you like, at the end) *to brotherly kindness love.*

**8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

So Paul says that we should add these things or include these things or incorporate these things in our lives, starting off with faith, then zeal, knowledge, self-control, then patience.

Patience is one of the key ingredients mentioned here. If we want to be, as it says, neither barren nor unfruitful, and I don't think any of us do, if we want to be fruitful, in other words, and enter God's kingdom with all the trumpets blowing and Jesus Christ saying, "Well done, you good and faithful servant,." then these are the characteristics we need. Notice faith

and perseverance, or faith and patience, are two of them. They are very important.

I had to smile at this reference to knowledge here. It says to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. I guess I was almost flabbergasted reading the paper this morning here in England about an area of knowledge that is almost unbelievable. There has been a poll taken of younger people in England, ages 15 to 24. I guess you could say that is the next generation's leaders, 18, 20, 22,23,24. They were asked about the Ten Commandments and amazingly, ten percent of people in that age group had never **heard** of the Ten Commandments. Ten percent of this country's next generation of leaders hadn't even heard that there **were** Ten Commandments! Unbelievable!

And then, apparently, of those who had heard of their existence, half of them couldn't even name **one** of the Ten Commandments!

You are talking about a level of ignorance that is criminal! Talk about adding to your knowledge all these attributes? There is a whole generation, in this country at least, that "don't know nothing", if you will excuse the grammar! Half of them couldn't name a single one of the Ten Commandments.

Of those they did know, the best one was - "Thou shalt not steal." And guess which commandment was the least known of them all? I'll give you nine more guesses, but you will probably get this right away. The Sabbath commandment was the least known! Only four people out of one hundred had heard of the Sabbath commandment, age 15 to 24. Now that is absolutely shocking! Dismaying! Thankfully, hopefully, we are not in that category.

But you can see here that faith and patience, or faith and constancy are closely linked together. While we are in 2 Peter, let's go to chapter 3, verses 17 and 18. (For that ignorance of the Ten Commandments somebody should be taken out and shot, really. What have the school and churches been doing in Great Britain over the last twenty odd years?)

**17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware...** Another warning and it is a warning, by the way, to the beloved. That would be us!. We are God's beloved and if Peter, the Apostle, knew us, he would call us his beloved.

**17 You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;**

So being steadfast is being patient, is remaining constant. Peter is saying, "Look. You need to be constant. Don't get led away. Don't get pushed aside. Don't let any test, temptation, trial...don't let anything move you away from the truth and from your faith in God."

**18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.** So we are to grow in the good things, grow in grace, and part of growing in grace is growing in our Godly patience, constancy.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter, and read verse 58. **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast ...** That is what we are talking about. Be steadfast.... **immovable ...** that is really another way of saying the same thing. Don't deviate. Don't get pushed aside. Don't walk off by yourself.

**...always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.** And our labor might be fighting the good fight of faith, remaining firm in faith, knowing that believing and standing firm and standing fast and being constant is not going to be in vain because God's Word **must** be true. That's a pretty good verse there.

**...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding...** Always confident, really, because as we read earlier, "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse, various trials and tribulations." Not because the trial makes you joyful. It certainly doesn't, but when you know that God will see you through and out of it and deliver you, when you know that your faith will be proven and will be strong and that your patience will endure that and God will deliver you and you are absolutely

confident and assured of that, you can be much more encouraged.

No need to wring your hands with despair and say, "God's not going to see me through this time. I am going to fail this time. I am going to fall apart this time." You can't find joy in that sort of situation of expecting the worst and fearing the worst, but if you know that God will deliver and you have absolute confidence of that, it will give you a certain encouragement, a certain confidence. It says here **...always abounding in the work of the Lord...**, because you know that it is going to work out well in the end.

Let's turn to 1 Timothy, chapter 6. We were almost there earlier, with Mr. Cooper. We will pick up the story in verse 9, cutting somewhat into the context, but I think we can pick it up well enough. **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil ...** Notice that it is the **love** of money, not money itself. It is not being rich in itself. It is somebody who loves the money, who loves being rich.

It says "those who desire to be rich", so you might be a poor person desiring to be rich and lusting to be rich and coveting to be rich and fighting to be rich and cheating to be rich. So a rich person could be quite content with their wealth and use it wisely as Daniel and Abraham and Isaac and Joseph did, but there are many people who have no money but are still mean-hearted, mean-spirited, and desperately wicked because they have an unhealthy desire and a love for money even if they haven't got it. Of course there are people who have got it and also have an unhealthy lust and love for it.

**10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.** They did not remain constant on the path.

**11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.** So Paul, in his instructions to

this young evangelist says, “Timothy, as a man of God (and he could have said it to Tina, the woman of God), flee these things, flee these carnal, physical things but pursue righteousness, pursue godliness, pursue faith, and pursue love and pursue patience and gentleness.”

**12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.** Fighting the good fight of faith is something where patience is required. In fact, I would say that, very often, patience is the thing that is most necessary.

If you are in a fight, if you are going to wrestle somebody, you might be a strong, powerful person, but in a wrestling match, if your strength and power lasts about ten seconds, you are unlikely to win the fight, because it requires stamina.

If you went to a wrestling match with a top wrestling champion, talking hypothetically, because probably you and I would end up flat on our back, unconscious, in about five seconds, but talking of fighters, they need stamina, perseverance. They have to keep on going and remain in the fight.

So if you and I are going to fight the good fight of faith, it means that we are to keep on going, keep on being constant, keep on being patient, and not give up our faith after an hour, or a day, or a week, but keep on fighting the good fight of faith. It is a good fight because we win. Any fight that you win is a better fight than one that you lose, I can assure you of that.

Let's turn to Colossians, chapter 2, and read verses 4-7. **4 Now this I say** (says Paul) **lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.** Paul was some distance away, but he had heard about the fact that they were steadfast in their faith. They weren't wavering. It wasn't up one day and down the next. It was steadfast. They continued. They were constant in their faith, and that, to Paul, was good news. He didn't always have to bail them out because of some crisis from one week to

the next. They were steadfast in their faith in Christ.

**6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.** So these people were rooted; they were established. One translation talks about their “resolute firmness” in Christ. They had roots down. They had made their decisions. They were going a particular way and you could not budge them. They were immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. It says here abounding in it “with thanksgiving,” because, if you know that you are fighting the good fight of faith, if you know that God's Word is true and can be relied upon, then you can have a great deal of thanksgiving, because you know that the outcome must be favorable.

Steadfastness, being patient, being constant is absolutely necessary. I think that without that, I doubt very much whether our faith would ever really be effective. Turn to Colossians, chapter 1, and read verses 9-12. This is our second to the last scripture. **9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.**

So Paul is praying for our brothers and sisters who lived in Colossae all those years ago, and the prayer that Paul had for them is the prayer that is meaningful for you and me today. We can pray this for each other. We can pray that we might be filled with the knowledge of God's will. A person could say, “Ah. I just don't know what the will of God is.” Well, here is the answer. Pray that God will give us the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The word for knowledge there is the Greek word that means full, precise, accurate knowledge. Not just a general, vague feeling about God, but we should be **filled**, it says. Filled up with this precise, accurate full knowledge of God.

**10 that you may** (have a) **walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him** (and that would require faith, by the way, because without faith it is impossible to please

God), **being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the** (full, precise, accurate) **knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might,** (that's God's might not ours) **according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.** Paul had a slight thing about long sentences, which can get a wee bit complicated at times. It can take ages to disassemble them, but in this particular case, looking at verse 11, it says that God, if we come to Him in prayer as Paul did for the Colossians, will strengthen **us** with all might according to His fantastic glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy!

So we can go to God and we can seek that He will strengthen us by His power for all patience. So we can have that inner strength and we can continue, not being moved by what we see, disturbed by what we hear. We can say, “No, no, no, no, no. I don't care what my senses tell me. I have God's Word on this and frankly, that is good enough for me.”

Notice that it says, “...for all patience and longsuffering with joy...” Going God's way should not be a life of misery and unhappiness, always complaining and whining and so on. There should be joy because, if you know that God is on your side, if God be for us, who can be against us? With God all things are possible, so having God on our side means that we should be the most optimistic and positive people there are! And having faith and the patience that undergirds it, what more do we need?

Let's turn to our final scripture in Acts, chapter 14, verses 21-22, recounting some of the travels of Paul. **21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples** (people like you and me), **they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."** So we do know that we will face tests, trials, tribulations. We live in a world where Satan is the god of this age. These things can happen to us, but notice that we must continue in the faith. To

continue in the faith means to remain patient and steadfast in the faith.

In summary; without faith it is impossible to please God. We know that. Without

patience it is impossible, really, to keep your faith going . So we need both faith **and** patience. The twins really need to be together. As I said earlier, it says, “pursue

faith” and “pursue patience”. So brethren, in conclusion, don’t forget Patience, the Forgotten Key!

Transcription and formatting by Diane Goddard and Don Goddard

Transcription of a sermon for reading is more than a simple typing of the words spoken. The style and grammar appropriate for a spoken sermon is not the same as for an essay, as the reader may observe. Inflection or intensity of the voice often alter the meaning of words; and punctuation and font face have been used to try to reflect the speaker’s intent. Even the paragraph breaks require care to avoid shifting the sense of a passage. Additionally, for the sake of readability, falters, and misspoken or repeated words etc. are sometimes adjusted where it will not alter the meaning. The preparation of this document was done with the intent of the most accurate transmission of the speaker’s message and any shift in meaning is purely unintentional.