

Obtaining Patience

by Wayne Goff

I read a cartoon once that pictured a man praying by his bed at night. The caption read, "Lord, last night I asked You for patience. What's the hold up?" That may sum up America's attitude pretty well. We live in an instant gratification society. We can have microwavable popcorn or bacon in seconds. In a minute or two we can heat up last night's leftovers, or a TV dinner. "Plastic money" allows us to buy whatever we want and pay for it later. Even our corner stores in Kansas City are named "**Quick Trip**." Am I saying that all these things are bad? No sir, I am not. I use all of the things I have mentioned. But a side effect to this instant gratification is that along the way we lose our desire to spend careful time developing ideas, character, or concepts. There are so many things in our world that we can fill up our lives with *in a moment* that we may opt to eliminate the things that take time and effort. Like the praying man in the cartoon, we may desire the characteristics of a lifetime without accepting the responsibility of taking the time to develop them. Patience is one of those moral qualities that must be developed over time. Look at some things the Bible says about patience:

Patience Of God

"calls God the God of patience. He is both the One Who is patient and Who carefully teaches it to us. Jehovah described Himself to Moses as *"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation"* (**Exodus 34:6-7**). He is both longsuffering in the fact that He grants mercy and forgiveness, but He is also patient, or persistent, in visiting guilt and its consequences upon the sinner. In Nehemiah's restoration of the people to their homeland, the people confessed their guilt and sin before God for one-fourth of the day, exclaiming how patient God had been with their forefathers in the wilderness wanderings: *"But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and did not forsake them"* (**Nehemiah 9:17**). God had to withhold His own desire to cut off Israel when they departed from him down through the centuries (**Isaiah 48:9**).

In the New Testament, **Mark 12:1-11** contains the **Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers**, in which Jesus portrayed the unfaithfulness of Israel to God and God's patience in *repeatedly* sending messengers of warning, and even His own Son. God's patience with men has always been for the purpose of repentance (**Romans 2:4**). It should not be mistaken for a lack of guilt or a forgetfulness to punish sin. In time, God will destroy all impenitent souls in hell. But now, He desires that all men repent and come to a knowledge of salvation (**2 Peter 3:9-10**).

Patience Of God's People

God's people are to be **patient**, and a good study on how that is to be done is God Himself. Patience must be developed under difficulties. Patience can never be learned while everything is perfect, peaceful, and proper. The psalmist learned patience when he viewed the prosperity of the wicked (**Psalms 37**). He learned patience in viewing the end of the wicked and the end of the righteous. He concluded, *"A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of the many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous"* (**vv. 16-17**). We are taught to be patient under adversity. *"But we also glory in tribulations,*

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