

# Patience: A Long View

We are called to a life characterized by patience. Yet when asked to give an account for our patience, many of us hang our head in shame. Oh boy, we might say to ourselves, I was too short with that employee. I got angry at that motorist. I'm frustrated with my spouse. I'm exasperated by my kids. I suppose everyone has room to grow in patience. The aforementioned are good examples of the struggle with patience. They indeed expose critical areas of much needed growth. But they only hint at the essence of patience. Our view of patience is much too short-sighted. Because we have had a short-sighted view of patience, the beauty of the term has been limited. Let's consider a longer view of patience. By doing so, we will redeem the term patience and bring back its power and thereby, its beauty.

Put simply, being patient is "bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint" (Merriam-Webster 1828). It is important to note that patience requires discomfort. Patience is teed up when there is a dissonance that needs to be endured, a suffering of some kind. Patience exists in the overlap of my reaction to that suffering. Minor suffering, like when I'm made late by an inconsiderate motorist, is contrasted with major suffering, like when my unfavorable circumstances are a present reality for the rest of my life. We quickly realize there are two types of patience. Small p patience and capital P patience. Small p patience endures modest suffering for a relatively short duration while capital P patience endures significant suffering for a long period of time.

*Hebrews 11* is commonly known as the "Hall of Faith" chapter. Contained therein are fifteen men and two women named and commended for their faith. Countless others are referenced without name. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (v. 13) They not only lived by faith, they died in faith. That is, the promise that was seen afar off was never realized on this side of the grave. As pilgrims they endured the space between knowing the promise and realizing the promise, and that space was a lifetime. *Romans 8* says, "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (vs. 23-25) Patience is the currency of faith.

Now, what capital P patience is God asking you to endure?

- A disability?
- An affliction?
- A broken relationship?
- A dysfunction?
- A difficult marriage?
- An unresolved hurt?
- A temptation?
- A consequence of sin?
- A loss?
- A doubt?

Let's be clear, it is good and right to do all we can to find resolve in these areas. The Word of God gives us direction on how to do so. The Spirit of God gives us power to do so. God Himself exemplifies restoration and calls Himself the Reconciler (*2 Cor. 5:18-19*). However, we will never be able to escape all the brokenness we experience in this life. Abraham couldn't. Joseph couldn't. Samson couldn't. Nor could David. It then is in these areas of Patience that we live as pilgrims. We live with an unpleasant present because we have a future hope of reconciliation. The reconciliation that comes with the coming of Jesus Christ. "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." (*James 5:8*) And for that reconciliation, we patiently wait.

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