

#19 Northside Natter

27 July 2020

Today I'm looking at **Patience**.

Are you a patient person? I'm sure since coming to the Lord many of us would consider ourselves to be more patient, especially if we have been in the Lord for some years and learned to exercise that virtue. Yet there are areas where we all may struggle, to some degree, in exercising patience.

Jesus told us that even though our lives will be a blest one, it will also be one with tribulation peppered throughout its course.

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken unto you, (so) that in me ye might have peace. In the world, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.*

In Jesus our Saviour we find the peace we need during the tribulations this world brings upon us. Yet these tribulations can cause such a deep well of emotion to spring up in us, threatening to destroy our joy, that we struggle to focus on our Lord. This is where we must fight against our inner urges and forcibly tear our attention back to the word of God. So easy to do, right? No.

Tribulations come from all sorts of places and it doesn't matter what form they take. They test our faith, our ability to endure, and they bring on suffering, trial and distress as we are afflicted or oppressed by their burdens. We even find tribulation within the church. Yet we are told to be of good cheer because our Lord Jesus has already overcome the world, which means we can too.

Romans 5:3 *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also knowing that tribulation worketh patience.*

We are to be patient in all things. Not just a few. In everything. We look to endure the troubles of this world because we can't escape them. If we let them, they will overcome us and we will sink beneath the weight of them and our faith will suffer. Never give in to them but instead rely on the promises of God. There is a genuine struggle in doing so but the rewards are worth it, if we persevere with patience.

A good way to help our impatience is to focus on witnessing to others, praying for those in our 'sphere of influence' who need help, and attending to our first Love.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 *Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God our Father.*

Some tribulations do not require us to do anything to fix them. They are beyond our control, e.g. the pandemic that resulted in lockdown. We could only endure the trial and wait on the Lord to provide our needs. So, we prayed, zoomed, read our bibles, and where possible, we still witnessed at 1.5 metres.

Some tribulations require us to act on them. This is where we need to sit down with the Lord for a little while and pray about it. We read and take comfort in his word and ask for him to order our steps in the right path. Some difficulties are too big to resolve in one step. Sometimes we need to take many steps, and pray many times, to make that happen. Our patience will be sorely tested, but if we rely on the Lord, he will walk that path with us to get to a resolution. Many times, we will find that the answer comes from somewhere we never even thought of and with an unexpected result. The Lord has a thousand ways to answer every prayer.

Psalm 40:1 *I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry.*

Ecclesiastes 7:8 *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

Perhaps we are good at exercising patience in tribulation because we've had our fair share of them and possibly more. But what about when healings are needed? Do we expect an instant healing every time? There's nothing wrong with having that expectation and I even encourage it. What happens if it's not instant? What do we do then? After a year, two years, ten years, do we give up? Has our patience run its course? Or do we simply leave it with the Lord and wait for him to provide that healing in his good time?

Romans 8:25 *But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. Abraham got on with his life and patiently waited for the Lord to provide that son, but Sarah became impatient and manipulated circumstances to ensure it. The wrong son was born to the wrong woman which led to hostility, jealousy and great distress. If Sarah had been patient, the conflicts would not have existed. In spite of her impatience, twenty-five years after God's promise was given, Abraham had the right son to the right woman. Patience brings precious blessings.

Romans 15:4 *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

We are responsible for learning the lessons of those who went before us. It is accountability placed on us by walking in the Lord. We have no excuse for neglecting those lessons. Why? Because without them we will repeat those mistakes and be left feeling discomfited and hopeless. The Lord wants us to feel comforted and hopeful not the other way around. We can't ignore his advice.

There are many reasons we do not get what we want when we think we need it. Has God not heard our prayer? Of course, he has.

John 9:31 *Now we know that God heareth not sinners. But if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

1 John 5:14-15 *And this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us¹⁵ and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him.*

Are we saints of God? If so, we are worshippers of God and do his will. Therefore, he hears us. There is no question of him turning a deaf ear to his saints. We qualify in every respect. We must be patient and wait for the Lord to respond to our request of him.

But what if we think our healing request is not according to his will? Did Jesus go about in his ministry healing all those who came to him?

Luke 5:12-13 *And it came to pass when he was in a certain city behold a man full of leprosy, who seeing Jesus, fell on his face and besought him saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."¹³ and he (Jesus) put forth his hand and touched him saying, "I will. Be thou clean." And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*

It became obvious to everyone that it was the will of Jesus to make them whole. They were not refused. If we feel we are struggling to receive a healing from God, I suggest we go before the Lord and ask him to reveal to us why. Ask and keep on asking, seek and keep on seeking, knock and keep on knocking. Through it all giving praise and thanks to God. And be patient for the answer. It will come because God hears our prayers.

Patience in relationships is another area where we can give up when people weary us. We give up because the difficulties in that relationship have been ongoing for what we personally consider to be far too long – we're exasperated. We give up because we can't see a change in the other person, but perhaps it's us who needs to change. We give up because there are other tribulations in our lives that are beating us down and we feel we can't keep struggling with the 'same old' thing on top of it. This is the trying of our patience. Patience is like a muscle that needs to be exercised and strengthened over and over again. If we never exercise it, how can we expect to have it on hand when we most need it?

Sometimes we just run out of patience. Our storehouse is empty and there is no more. What are we going to do? As mentioned before, we focus on witnessing to others, praying for those in our 'sphere of influence' who need help and attending to our first Love. Why? It helps us to put the focus back on God and not on ourselves. Pray and never cease praying. The Lord will give us the patience to endure. He will refill our storehouse to the brim. When we feel like giving up, that's when he can assist the most.

Luke 21:19 *In your patience possess ye your souls.*

If we remain patient in all things, we will possess our souls. If we neglect exercising patience, we can lose out. Nothing is worth that. Let's continue to build our patience in all things and be found walking in faith and worshipping God when our Saviour returns.