

## TURNING THE CASUAL INTO THE ACTUAL

### **Part IX: Waiting for the Right Moment** **James 5:7-12 (NLT)**

*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:17)*

If you ever bought a car at a dealership before you know that having patience is key to a sale. I remembered how enduring it was when I bought my car. The salesman pushed really hard to sell the car and he used three tactics to do so. The first scheme was to keep me at the lot for as long as possible. I believe I was there for almost four hours negotiating with the salesman. The reason why salespeople try to prolong the sale is that they are hoping you will get tired and settle for anything that they recommend, which will normally cost you more money. The second tactic is when you settle for the price of the car. The salesperson will play this game where he will offer a high price to you. When you say no, he will go to his manager's offer, come back to you, and offer a small reduction of the price. Of course, when you say no again, he will go back to his manager's office and then come back with another small decrease in price. The point of this tactic is to make you feel like he is going out of his way to offer you a great deal. If you do not know what a fair price of the car should be, you may feel like the salesperson is supporting your side and you will end up buying the car and not really getting a good deal for it. The third tactic is when you discuss about financing the automobile. The salesperson will throw out all of these financial terminologies upon you to confuse you to believe you are getting a good monthly rate for your car. One common practice is that they will ask you how much you want to pay every month. This is a trick question: it does not matter how low a payment you want; what is more important is how much you will end up paying for the car in the end. Paying \$150 a month for 60 months will cost you more (\$9,000) than \$200 for 36 months (\$7,200).

The bottom line with these tactics is that by getting you confused and tired you may end up making a decision that will not benefit you at all. We do not think straight when we are exhausted. I prepared myself for this onslaught by remaining patient throughout the whole process, even willing to walk out of the negotiation and not feel bad about it. After the salesman recognized that I did my homework and came prepared, he knew he could not pull a fast one on me. I left the dealership with a brand new car and with a fair price to boot.

Developing patience is not only a worthwhile characteristic to have, but in fact, is a spiritual discipline that God desires for us to live out in our faith. When we talk about a faith that is real and transforming, it must encompass a lifestyle that is patient through and through. James 5:7-12 highlights the nature of patience, what it looks like, and how we must practically apply it in our relationships with one another.

<sup>7</sup>*Dear brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who eagerly look for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They patiently wait for the precious harvest to ripen.* <sup>8</sup>*You, too, must be patient. And take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.*

<sup>9</sup>*Don't grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you. For look! The great Judge is coming. He is standing at the door!*

<sup>10</sup>*For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.* <sup>11</sup>*We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. Job is an example of a man who endured patiently. From his experience we see how the Lord's plan finally ended in good, for he is full of tenderness and mercy.*

<sup>12</sup>*But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned for it.*

We can break this passage down into two main principles. The first deals with the nature of patience.

### **The Nature of Patience** (verses 7-8)

1. The main characteristics of patience is **waiting** and **persevering**.
  - The farmer waits for the rain, but must also continue to plant and prune while in the posture of waiting.

Sometimes we think that patience means sitting on our butt and be as useless as possible. But, that is not what patience is all about. To be patient does not mean we must stop living responsible lives. The farmer must continue to plant seeds and prune the plants while he waits for the rain to come. He cannot stop planting until the rains appear; he must persevere onward. This nicely illustrates what it means to spiritually wait and to spiritually persevere:

- Spiritual waiting – taking the posture of listening and obeying the Holy Spirit

We learn to wait because we do not want to move ahead of God's plan. To be patient means we need to engage with God in a listening posture, absorbing all that he has for us. When we obey the Holy Spirit's commands we learn how to deal with one another in a loving merciful way. We need God's wisdom to teach us how to live fruitful and blessed lives so we can change the lives of other people.

- Spiritual perseverance – actively living out God's ways learned from his Word

But, learning to wait does not mean we stop living for God; God still expects us to do what he has called us to do. As we wait for his divine orders for our lives, we must continue to live out his truth that is found in Scripture. We do not need to wait for God to tell us to love people; he already instructed us to do so in the Bible! To wait for God while at the same time to persevere in his truth is a nice balance that cultivates patience in our lives.

2. The goal of patience is to become **mature and complete in Jesus Christ.**

- Be patient through life's trials until we gain spiritual maturity in heaven (*wait for the Lord's return*)

The time we finally exist in heaven with Jesus is when we will experience complete spiritual maturity in him. That is our ultimate goal in life and it is precisely this goal that will stir us to persevere forward when we are being attack by life's trials. When we know that the goal at the end of life is eternally rewarding we will not give up when we are bombarded with difficulties and suffering. Patience will help us focus on the prize at the end of the race with the power of the Holy Spirit guiding us every step of the way.

3. The hope of patience is Jesus coming back **to deliver us from life's trials and suffering.**

- The hope for the farmer is the rain he eagerly waits for.
- The hope for humankind is God's promise of eternal salvation for those who believe.

Knowing the goal of being mature in Christ is amplified with the hope that it is Jesus who will ultimately deliver us from the pain that we are encountering in life. The farmer's goal is a bountiful crop. His hope lies in the rain that he is patiently waiting for. Our goal is spiritual maturity in Jesus in heaven. Our hope is his promise that those who choose to have a relationship with him have already been saved and have already achieved the goal. Though we have not truly experience complete maturity yet while on earth, it has already been given to us, as long we remain in a posture of seeking after God's will in our lives.

4. Those who are patient **stand firm in the Lord.**

That is why James calls us to remain courageous in the midst of trials. To stand firm in patience allows God to take care of us and protect us from the evil schemes of Satan. We do not fall apart when we put our complete trust in God alone. Patience is cultivated in this spiritual relationship with the Lord.

But, as we learn and develop patience through our relationship with God, God wants us to practice it in relationship to others.

### **How to Practice Patience** (verses 9-12)

Example when to be patient – *Do not grumble against one another*

5. Spiritual formula – **suffering, perseverance, blessing**

Note that there is a general pattern when we apply patience with one another. Patience is called for when there is suffering involved, especially in relationships. The prophets of old and even Job himself learned patience through suffering. It is here that God wants to see if we are willing to persevere and leave everything up to him. When we endure in patience, we allow God to deliver us and bless us. Such a pattern ends in God's plan for good.

Example when to be patient – *Let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no*

Living a life of patience is part of God's calling for the church. Believers must develop a patient character because God values relationships. When we are patient with one another we preserve relationships. Patience promotes people and prevents brokenness. God has shown us what patience truly looks like in life. May our faith be actively real with one another through godly patience.

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