

## Faith

### Part 6 – Faith And Patience

Who am I? I wanted to be a writer. I wrote my first book and submitted it to a publisher. Some time later I received a rejection slip. I tried again. I got another rejection slip. I tried again and got another. 100, 200, most people would have given up. I received more than 700 rejection slips until finally my first book was published in 1932. I went on to write over 600 books under 17 pseudonyms and founded the Crime Writers' Association in 1953. My name is John Creasey.

This is our sixth study in this series on faith.

So far we've learnt that faith doesn't come from some bright idea that we dreamt up.

Real faith is initiated by God.

We discovered that real faith comes from the Word of God, and that each Word from God brings with it a parcel of faith.

But for faith to come from the Word of God, we must first have a hearing heart. Rom 10:17.

And in our last study we learned that when the Word of God brings faith, that faith brings with it the potential to do the works that God has planned for us to do.

Now, we're left with a question: What happens when God speaks, our heart is open to God's promise, faith comes, we step out, and nothing happens?

Seemingly God's promise didn't come to pass, so how do we hold on?

Because I've discovered that many, many times there's a waiting period between the time when God makes the promise and the time of fulfilment.

How many of you are waiting for the fulfilment of one of God's promises, either through Scripture or the prophetic word or God speaking directly to you?

Well, there's this wonderful quality called patience.

This is something most of us aren't naturally good at.

A man's car stalled in heavy traffic as the light turned green. Every effort to restart the motor failed, and the car horns honking behind made matters worse. Finally, he got out of his car, walked back to the first driver and said, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. If you'll go up there and give it a try, I'll stay here and blow your horn for you."

Heb 6:12 ... do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Interestingly, there are two Greek words that can be translated patience, and they're often found in the same passage of Scripture.

They have two different meanings.

We're only going to look at one today – the one in our Scripture in Hebrews – the other we'll look at in our next study on faith and trials.

Patience (*makrothumia*) – the prolonged restraint of anger (*thumos*) or agitation.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the holding back of the natural anger or inner turmoil you might feel as a result of having to wait.

This word is often translated longsuffering.

Heb 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We are so brainwashed with the need for instant gratification, but I can almost guarantee that if you have decided to take God at His Word or if God has promised you something specific, you **will** be tested.

So we need to look at what the Bible has to say about longsuffering or patience and try to learn about its relationship to faith.

And we're going to take a brief look at some of the Old Testament heroes whose faith and patience we're supposed to be imitating.

1. Patience helps us to forgive those who wrong us.

Eph 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with **longsuffering**, bearing with one another in love

Col 3:12,13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, **longsuffering**; (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Joseph is undoubtedly one of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament.

His life is one long series of circumstances that seemed to work against him.

1. Gen 37:1-11 – God gives him dreams of greatness – he was only 17 years old (vs 2).
2. Gen 37:12-36 – His brothers sell him to slave traders who in turn sell him in Egypt
3. Gen 39 – God blesses him there. He refuses to commit adultery with his master's wife, so she falsely accuses him of trying to rape her – his master throws him in jail.
4. Gen 40 – God blesses him there too.
5. Gen 41 – Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is made Prime Minister – he is now 30 years old (vs 46).

What a life!

What allowed Joseph to forgive his brothers in the face of cruel mistreatment?

What gave Joseph the stamina to hang in there through thirteen long years of slavery and imprisonment?

What gave Joseph the ability to hang on to his faith in the promise of God despite every setback?

The quality of longsuffering came in and kept his faith strong.

It's not enough to have faith, we need patience too.

Otherwise we'll give up long before we even see the results of our faith.

2. Patience authenticates us as servants of God

2 Cor 6:4-6 But in all things we commend (to represent as worthy<sup>2</sup>) ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, (5) in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; (6) by purity, by knowledge, by **longsuffering**, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

These guys used to write such long sentences – like shopping lists – by the time you get to the end, it's easy to forget what it was all about.

So let's read it again, and skip some of the list.

But in all things we represent ourselves as worthy as ministers (servants) of God... by (among other things) **longsuffering**...

Longsuffering is one of the qualities that authenticates our being fit to be servants of God.

And we all should be servants of God; just because you're not a pastor, that doesn't let you off the hook.

Longsuffering is the ability to hang in there through thick and thin, no matter what happens.

David demonstrates this quality too.

Here is another man whose longsuffering allowed him to maintain his trust in God, confident that He would fulfil His promise.

1. 1 Sam 16 – Samuel anoints David to be king of Israel – the Word of God describes him as being “a youth, ruddy and good-looking”. (17:42)
2. David served King Saul as a therapeutic musician, then by killing Goliath, then as the leader of Saul’s men of war (1 Sam 18:5)
3. 1 Sam 18 – In return, Saul tried twice to kill David while David played music for him. (vs. 10,11) Then he tried to have him killed by the Philistines. (vs. 17) Then Saul tried to kill him again (19:10), then sent his men four more times to kill him. (19:11,20,21) Then Saul went to get David (19:22). Twice Saul went out with his armies against David and both times David had opportunity to kill him but didn’t. (Chapters 24 & 26)
4. David was 30 years old before he became king, and then he only ruled over Judah – he had to wait another 7½ years before he became king over Israel too. (2 Sam 5:4,5)

I found 11 times where Saul tried to kill David – anyone here ever had someone made an attempt to take your life? Scary stuff!

Can you imagine what it was like on that last occasion, when opportunity presented itself once more for David to get his own back and kill Saul?

And his men are there saying, “Come on David, the guy’s a fruitloop. God’s rejected him anyway.”

One of the qualities that proved David’s ability to be a minister of God, was his longsuffering.

That quality helped him to hold onto God in the most serious of situations – even when his life was at risk.

His patience helped him to maintain his faith in the promise of God.

And authenticated him as a true servant of God.

Longsuffering means trusting God that He will come through even when circumstances seem to be going the other way.

### 3. Patience ensures that we will reap the harvest

James 5:7,8 Therefore be **patient**, brethren, 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. (8) You also be **patient**. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The farmer sows and then he waits, because he knows that he’s going to reap.

For instance, Moses sent twelve spies into the Promised Land to check it out. Initially, only one brought back a good report – Caleb (Numbers 13:30,31).

We hear more about Joshua, but it was Caleb who stood alone.

Evidently Joshua later changed his mind (Numbers 13:30,31; 14:6-9).

So through no fault of his own, Caleb had to play the waiting game (Numbers 14:30,34).

He waited 40 years till God gave them the go-ahead to enter the Promised Land.

Now there’s a man who knew what patience was all about.

He knew that one day he’d reap what he’d sowed.

But it takes time – you sow, then you reap – but not immediately.

### 4. Patience requires inner strength

Col 1:11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and **longsuffering** with joy;

1. Gen 12:2 – Abraham (75 years old) God promised to make him a great nation, implying descendants.
2. Gen 15:4-6 – God makes a specific promise to give Abraham a child, and Abraham believes God.
3. Gen 16:16 – 11 years later (86 years old) Ishmael is born.
4. Gen 17:1,2 – Abraham is 99 years old when God renews his promise.
5. Gen 21:5 – Abraham is 100 years old when Isaac is born.

In all, he waited 25 years for the fulfilment of the promise!

No wonder this verse tells us that for this kind of longsuffering we need the strengthening of the power of God.

We cannot do it in our own strength.

5. This kind of patience / longsuffering comes only from the Holy Spirit.

Someone said that to become long-suffering one has to be long-bothered.

That's probably not what we want to hear, but it's still true.

But longsuffering comes directly as a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

This very important quality comes from the Holy Spirit.

Today, you may be trusting God for healing, financial provision, direction, wisdom to make decisions, the salvation of a loved-one.

Hang in there – if God has made a promise, He will come through.

Allow the Holy Spirit to undergird your faith with this powerful quality of longsuffering.

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Colin (Ed.) *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol II p 769

<sup>2</sup> Vine, W.E. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* Vol. 1 p 211