

Virtues of Christian Character – The Importance of Being Patient

Patience is a bitter plant that produces sweet fruit.

A phoney story emerged during World War Two about a secret meeting between Hitler, Mussolini and Churchill in 1940. They supposedly met for tea in a Paris restaurant famous for its pond full of rare carp. Hitler claimed that he had already won the war and Mussolini backed him up. So Churchill quickly opposed him. Realising that the meeting wasn't going any-where Churchill decided to resort to a wager. He suggested that the first person to catch a carp without using fishing equipment would be acknowledge as having won the war. Hitler pulled out his revolver and shot at the fish, but missed. Mussolini jumped straight in and tried with his bare hands, but also failed. Churchill picked up the spoon from his saucer and started tossing water out the pond and over his shoulder. When asked why, he replied, *"It may take a long time, but we're going to win – that's for sure!"*

"By patience a ruler is persuaded" [Proverbs 15:15].

When measuring true Christian character, "patience" must be very high on the spectrum. James encourages his readers to be patient, in order to receive the harvest here on earth and the crown of life [in heaven] which they desire [James 5:7-9]. Psalm 37:7 tells us to... ***"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him."*** Most of you can do neither - you are either too restless before Him or too impatient with Him. But, do you know? You're ***"being invigorated and strengthened with all supernatural power according to His glorious might, so that you may exercise great endurance and patience with joy"*** [Colossians 1:11]. Notice that patience must be practised with joy!

You could never learn to be patient or courageous if there were only joy in the world. God has equipped you with the ability to endure any lengthy ordeal with joy! It's your courage and patience that enables you to outlast the battle and secure the victory. ***"We need to be persistent and undaunted so that when we have done the will of God we will receive what He has promised"*** [Hebrews 10:36].

Patience and persistence go hand in hand, and they usually operate in pressure situations. This is generally due to you having placed yourself in a state of expectancy – awaiting the arrival of something anticipated or promised. Habakkuk 2:3 says, ***"The vision will be fulfilled. But if it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place."*** Patience is bitter but its fruit is sweet!

Are you presently in the *waiting room* - awaiting the vision to be fulfilled? Or are you in the *departure lounge* – waiting for something to take off in your life? If you are, remember this, ***perseverance*** and ***patience*** are both developed and perfected through tests and trials. But then so is character! And *character* is your greatest visible quality! Therefore, such tests and trials actually do help to *perfect* you as a Christian.

Patience is the hallmark of a mature believer. James 1:3, 4 ***"Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith will bring forth endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience run its full course and do a thorough work, so that you may be people perfectly and fully developed, with no defects, lacking in nothing"*** [Amplified].

You only become mature and complete by allowing *patience* to run its full course. The truth is, the more patience you exercise, the more death you will inflict on your carnal nature. And only then are you mature, producing true Godliness!

Patience is counting down without blasting off!

Frustrated, impatient people usually blast off at the first sign of pressure. But take note:

- (a) Impatience reflects inner defeat. How can you be patient if, in your heart, you've already lost?
- (b) Impatience chooses its friends. An impatient person does not want to hang out with someone who is prepared to sit it out.
- (c) Impatience always justifies itself. If you are impatient, the chances are, you have already made excuses for your actions.
- (d) Impatience limits the present. An impatient person cannot enjoy the present. To him, each day is an opportunity to get busy, and keep busy.
- (e) Impatience distorts the truth. An impatient person, because he is basically immature, cannot correctly handle the truth. Therefore, he will distort it accordingly.
- (f) Impatience sabotages the future. How can the future unfold at its correct pace when it's being constantly interrupted and meddled with? Timing is everything! So take your hands off your future and simply trust God. He is the only one who knows the future anyway!

Over the years, I've noticed that God does many of those very special and beneficial things during the waiting period – when I'm in the departure lounge of life. So I encourage you to be patient, because what He has for you is truly worth waiting for.

As with Job you must understand that God's will toward you is always good, and that He cares and communicates His caring to you. Even when you don't fully understand what's been happening, He's always there for you! Even when there is no way, then He will make a way for you. God turns very negative situation to your benefit – but to His glory.

In times of stress and suffering you will always face the temptation of making God your adversary instead of your advocate. But you must purpose in your heart to wait on God *patiently* so that He can reveal Himself, and give you His plans and purposes.

If God brings you to it, He will surely bring you through it!

Your faith struggle is a personal one and it's only with patience, courage and perseverance that you can stand and win the battle. This is important if you are going to be recognised as someone of strong character! King David's character and conduct affected the lives of the rebels in the Cave of Adullam and equipped them for leadership. How are your actions and your attitudes influencing those around you?

Are you negative and impatient, or are you positive and patient and at rest?