

# SEEING GOD AS HE IS

## LESSON 6 - GOD'S PATIENCE

### I. How do we define patience?

#### A. Biblical words:

1. “**savlanut**” (Hb), in the OT, from the word *sevel*, which means to bear pain/ suffering/ agony
2. “**erech ruach**” (Hb), literally *long breath*
3. “**macrothumia**” (GK), in the NT - literally *macros* (long) and *thumos* (soul or heart)

**B.** God's patience can best be defined by His longsuffering kindness to sinners (Romans 2:4). When Scripture describes God as being patient, it means that He endures humanity's flaws, does not easily get angry, and holds back judgment to make room for repentance. He showed patience and longsuffering, even to His enemies (Gen. 15:16; Ex. 11:4-18; Psalm 2:10-11; Psalm 94:3; I Peter 3:20; Rev. 6:10). His patience is also demonstrated in how He condescended to work through imperfect humans (such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses) to carry out His plans. He is not tolerant of sin, but He is tolerant of His forgiven children as they strive to follow Him. The best example of God's patience is in the Person of Jesus. The Son of God took on human flesh, lived among His creation, and endured challenges in His ministry. He also patiently suffered humiliation at the cross and willingly sacrificed Himself to accomplish God's redemptive work for mankind.

**B. We** usually define patience as the capacity to accept to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. We often temper patience with words such as endurance, stoicism, sufferance, restraint, tolerance, and resignation – all suggesting an unpleasant experience and suggesting it is usually something that is forced upon us unwillingly – something to be endured in silence, regardless of the outcome. We tend to view

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the exercise of our patience as only a painful test, never something useful & beneficial – if this is our opinion, we disrespect and shortchange the wisdom of God (James 1:2-4)

## II. Important scriptures about patience:

\* Genesis 29:20 – “And Jacob served 7 years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her.”

\*Exodus 34:6 - “*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness.*”

\*Psalm 86:15 – “*But you, lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness.*”

\*Psalm 103:8 – “*The LORD is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in mercy.*”

\*Ecclesiastes 8:11-12 – “*Because the **sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily**, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.*”

\*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.*”

\*Psalm 37:7-9 – “*Be still before the Lord and wait **patiently** for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.*”

\* I Peter 3:20 – “*...who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine **longsuffering** waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*”

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*\*2 Peter 3:8–9, 11-15 – “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should repentance...Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the **patience** of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.”*

*\*Romans 8:23–25 – “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with **patience**”.*

*\*Romans 2:4 – “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and **forbearance and patience**, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”*

*\*James 1:19–20 – “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, **slow to speak, slow to anger**; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

*\*Galatians 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-*

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*control. Against such things there is no law.”*

*\*James 1:2–4 - “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces **steadfastness**. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

*\*Colossians 3:12–13 – “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and **patience**, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”*

*\*James 5:7–8 – “Be **patient**, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”*

*\*Romans 12:12 – “Rejoice in hope, be **patient** in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”*

*\*Galatians 6:9 – “And let us **not grow weary** of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”*

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

*\*Ephesians 4:2 – “With all humility and gentleness, with **patience**, bearing with one another in love...”*

*\*2 Timothy 4:2 – “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”*

## III. Patience and the human condition

**A.** As we are made in God’s image, He has filled us with the capacity for patience (if not the innate desire for it...)

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1. Despite this fact, man's ability to exhibit patience remains severely limited without *practice* and *help*
  2. God *expects* us to not only to exercise this trait, but He provides all the support and resources necessary to do so, in order for us to control our physical and emotional needs and cope with life's difficulties and remain joyful
  3. Something to remember: losing control of our patience in non-spiritual situations or matters usually leads to loss of spiritual control as well
- B.** Many life situations typically challenge our patience:
1. Stress – caused by nearly anything with which we cope poorly
  2. Adversity – anything which seems to impede our desired progress
  3. Disappointment – loss; failure; betrayal
  4. Physical pain – illness; injury/ disability; aging
  5. Persecution – real or perceived: physical, mental, or spiritual
- C.** What are the typical emotional challenges to our patience?
1. Anxiety - mental and spiritual fear which prevents our well-being
  2. Pain – physical/ mental/ emotional/ spiritual
  3. Anger – from real injury, or merely from a quick temper or self-righteousness judgement
  4. Jealousy – caused by envy and self-centeredness
- D.** The typical human responses when we are stressed and our patience is tested:
1. Anger – brooding; evil thoughts; unkindness; vengence
  2. Anxiety - mental & spiritual paralysis & disorganization
  3. Despondency/ depression – inactivity; self-centeredness;

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detachment socially and spiritually

4. Revenge – in word or in deed

5. Resignation or even indifference (real – empty acceptance; emotional and spiritual ‘numbness’) or false (‘I’ll pretend I don’t really care’)

E. What are qualities we can develop to strengthen & increase our patience?

1. Love – learn to be ‘other-centered’; focus on the needs of our brothers and neighbors, not our own desires

2. Joy – should not depend on things or situations and outcomes in this life, but rather be spiritual and immutable (fixed and consistent and eternal)

3. Peace & contentment – perfect equanimity; our home should be in heaven and not on this earth; although life and this universe is wonderful, it is still filled with disappointments and always ends in death – what remains forever?

4. Humility - thinking of others first and less of yourself

5. Preparedness - a second thought for most people; a skill we can all develop which will do more to relieve heartache than most everything else

**“Having patience** doesn’t mean that life’s difficulties and adversities aren’t important and we ignore them, but rather we don’t have to let them control us. These problems are a normal part of the human condition to endure, but given God’s promise in Romans 8:28, He can use these challenges to make us stronger, holier, happier, and more useful in the Kingdom.”

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