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ACTIVE PATIENCE

What are the common causes of impatience in your life?

What did others have to endure while Jesus waited for you to accept His salvation?

Imagine your great great granddaughter. What would you endure for her to be saved?

Matthew 24:12-13 – ¹²And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

1) Why We Wait...

Waiting is the act of patience responding to the awareness that things are not as we expect them to be. In the mundane sense, it is caused by the patience to allow for the minor frustrations of our daily desires. The act of stopping as the yellow light turns red. Biblically, waiting is our expression of faith that God is working out His purposes and that the results will be evident. Most of us expect God to correct those who know Him, punish those who reject Him, and ultimately rid the world of evil as He ushers in the kingdom of heaven. We are right to expect these things as God Himself has foretold them in His Scriptures. The way in which God brings about His purposes are contrary to our intuitive expectations. This contradiction tempts us to doubt the validity of our reason for waiting. May we be strong enough to produce the fruit of patience in the face of our doubts.

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◆ **Against the tide**: We are a logical species. We intuitively grasp the relationship of cause and effect, responding accordingly. We understand that trends persist unless interrupted. We observe “the increase of lawlessness (Matthew 24:12)” and rationally expect it to continue. This is true in the broad sense as we take in the movements and events of our time that appear as an increase in lawlessness. It is true also in the narrow sense as our personal circumstances deteriorate due to other’s abusive behavior. Our expectations of God go against the tide of daily reality. If you want to cultivate a harvest of patience, you must expect divine intervention.

◆ **Day of reckoning**: The image of divine intervention for many is the day of reckoning. That glorious day in which all those who have disparaged the name of God and offended us are exposed and punished. God’s vengeance at last. His perfect will fully revealed through the purge of all that opposes Him. The image shifts as we think about our friends and family. The image becomes one in which we hope for the divine intervention of salvation. We wait for them to be included in those who “will be saved (v13).”

II) **While We Wait...**

The act upon which we wait is the salvation of Jesus in the fullest sense of the word. In this way, patience is a measure of our faith in Him. The duration of our patience is the limit of our hope that He will do what we expect Him to do. When our patience is exhausted, we are tempted to shift from waiting on Jesus to acting on His behalf. Rarely in our exhausted state do we act in a way worthy of His name. Our impulse is to battle those offensive to God, forcing them into conformance or destroying them. When patience is gone, we give up on love and move on to war.

◆ **Combat injustice**: Faced with a world in which there is an “increase in lawlessness (v12),” we perceive the necessity to attack outlaws. It is not hard to identify those practicing lawlessness of one kind or another. They are the enemy—God’s enemy. Except this lack of patience, this decision that now is the time to give up waiting on those to change their ways, is a decision to stop believing that Jesus can and will save the lost. It fulfills the declaration that “the love of many will grow cold (v12)” by exchanging our willingness to bring out another’s best for destructive acts. We mistake condemning another with combatting injustice.

◆ **Forced rescue**: We hope for more than the destruction of evil. We hope for the salvation of our friends and family. We do not see them

as agents of evil, but rather victims of the world’s lawlessness who deserve to be rescued. We tell them over and over to trust in Jesus and obey Him. Waiting for them to accept this message can be more exhausting than experiencing general lawlessness. The temptation to defend them from outlaws is extreme, as is the desire to force rescue upon them. Impatience comes through as we stop waiting for Jesus and coerce them by any means available. This is another way that “the love of many will grow cold (v12).” It feels right, but strays from the salvation promised in patience.

III) **The Hope for Which We Wait...**

Our perception that things are not as they should be is correct. This can be twisted to lead us astray by focusing our attention on what is wrong. Our hope is the advent of righteousness, not the end of lawlessness. When we seek the kingdom of heaven rather than the destruction of evil, our patience grows. We understand that we cannot force God, or He is not God. We trust His plan is perfect. We look in faith for the good He is doing, His works of salvation. We discover that the source of His patience—and ours—is His love for all His children.

◆ **His presence**: Jesus confuses us when He says that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Instinctively, we expect that to include the removal of wickedness. That obviously has not happened. Wise reconciliation starts with assuming the truth of His statement and working out how our expectations must change. The arrival of the kingdom is not a removal, it is the addition of His presence. Knowing He has found us worthy to reside within and bear His royal name and image is priceless. This is the source of the patience to be “one who endures to the end (v13).” He has already done inside us that for which we are waiting. We are to actively live holy lives patiently expecting the full effect.

◆ **All its citizens**: You and I have entered the kingdom of heaven once we have welcomed Jesus into our lives. This can cause the tension we feel as we try to be patient despite having already received what we need. Yet a desire for more grows within. Our desire for more flows from His glory being incomplete. That requires the kingdom of heaven to be inhabited by all its citizens. God’s patience to endure evil is perfect because it provides the time and space for all the lost who will accept salvation to do so. “The one who endures to the end will be saved (v13),” because that one will have glorified Jesus in every way. We exhibit His power of salvation, reflect His image, and willingly pay any cost to help others reflect Him, too. Active patience is the faithful endurance of anything while He saves the world.