

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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HAVE A LITTLE PATIENCE

Christianity is a religion of endurance, stamina, and persistence. The Christian life is a long-distance run which requires fortitude and durability instead of a 300-meter sprint which requires speed and dexterity. The child of God must possess a resilient spirit which will not buckle, bend, or break under the load of hardship. The Christian should have an unyielding resolve to never quit and always persevere in service to the Lord. We are exhorted to "be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The Heavenly Father calls upon His children to be patient!

Peter admonished His readers to add "patience" to their faith (2 Peter 1:6). The Old Testament canon has been preserved to help teach us "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). The Hebrew writer told his audience they had "need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). Jesus commended the Ephesian church, because He knew their patience (Revelation 2:3-4). Thyatira was similarly praised, because Jesus had witnessed their patient service (Revelation 2:19). Though heavily affected by persecution and difficulty, the church at Thessalonica was an example to all churches, because they had "patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (2 Thessalonians 1:4). These Scriptures, along with a multitude of others, impress upon our minds the importance of patience in the Christian life. All of God's children should be working to cultivate a more patient spirit. Consider a few key areas wherein we need to have a little patience.

FIRST, WE NEED A LITTLE PATIENCE IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY. Life on earth is filled with challenges, trials, and hardships. James reminds us we will fall into "diverse trials" (James 1:2). Diverse trials denote the potential of facing a wide array of adversity. It is possible to experience financial difficulties, trials with our health, adversity in the home, problems at work, emotional difficulties, and a whole host of other things which can test our faith. Satan is the specialist at constructing hurdles of hardship in our lives.

However, the Christian should always seek to persevere through life's difficulties and overcome the hurdles Satan erects before us. We are told to "let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4) in the difficult moments of life. If we patiently bear the complications of life, the Scriptures remind "we count them happy which endure" (James 5:11). Patience will enable us to pass through the crucible of adversity and come out better, brighter, and stronger on the other side. We need a little patience in times of adversity!

SECOND, WE NEED A LITTLE PATIENCE IN SERVICE TO GOD. The Christian should be in service to God for the long haul. Many, however, become quickly disheartened by the apparent fruitlessness of their labors. They attempt to spread the Gospel, but they lose heart over few conversions. They attempted to be involved in God's cause, but they fizzle out over little results. Instead of continuing in work and service, they become weary and quit. However, James tells us, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7). The "early rain" would soften the soil in the autumn, and the "latter rain" would come in the early spring to mature the harvest. The farmer, therefore, would have to wait many weeks for his seed to produce fruit. However, he patiently waited, and there came forth precious fruit of the earth. Equally, the Lord urges His spiritual farmers to "not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). If we faithfully work, labor, and serve, God will ultimately produce a bountiful harvest in our life. We need a little patience in our service to God!

THIRD, WE NEED A LITTLE PATIENCE WITH OTHERS. Paul told the Thessalonians to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). We are to manifest a patient spirit to all men, because God is patient with mankind. Everyone honest would agree the Lord has been longsuffering towards them. God has continually borne us along despite our failings, foolishness, and lapses of faith. We, therefore, should extend the same patience to those around us. We need to be patient with our spouse, our children, and ourselves. We need to be patient with our brethren, the weak and the struggling, and new Christians. We need to be patient with those in the world, those we are trying to convert, and those we are trying to restore. We need to be patient with the unlovable, the barely tolerable, and the difficult. Many will try our patience, and some will even weary our patience, but we must remember "love suffers long" (1 Corinthians 13:4). In all our relationships, we should strive to let patience, love, and acts of goodness prevail. We need a little patience in our dealings with others!

- Brandon Baggett

Seven "I am" Declarations of the Lord Jesus

John makes his purpose for writing the gospel account that bears his name crystal clear: "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31).

The Lord Jesus revealed His identity in different ways, and the four gospel writers present an overwhelming case that He is exactly who He claimed to be: the very Son of God. Considering John's eyewitness testimony, he records seven "I am" declarations made by Jesus which indicate that He is "the Light of men" (John 1:4):

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51). Jesus is the one who gives life and sustains life, "the living bread that came down out of heaven." Spiritually, this is food for the soul, of which one could eat and never hunger. The figurative expression finds meaning in the Lord's inspired words of life. His words "are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). His "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) constitute the spiritual food that sustains men. One "may eat of it and not die." (John 6:50).

"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5). This is "the Light of life." One who follows Christ "will not walk in the darkness." Light enables us to see clearly. We stumble over obstacles when we attempt walking in darkness. The words of Christ came from God (John 8:28; 12:49; 15:15; cf. Psalm 119:130), and are designed to remove ignorance from the heart in a world of darkness and death. Christ is the light, and in Him those who are dead in trespasses and sins can be made alive (Ephesians 2:5).

"I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9). In this figure of speech, the door of the sheepfold is very important (see John 10:1-5) as it presents the legitimate means of entrance and exit for sheep who recognize their shepherd's voice. Only Jesus Christ is the door for His disciples (having the follower disposition of sheep in relation to their shepherd) to enjoy the comfort of spiritual security. Thieves and robbers will try to bypass the doorkeeper, and with destructive motives, using their strange voices, will attempt to kill and destroy the sheep. His sheep hear only His voice.

"I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14). This statement identified Jesus as the shepherd-king of Old Testament prophecies that would fulfill the hope of Israel (cf. Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11-31). Jesus is the good shepherd because he gives His life for the sheep. Not only does He daily watch over them, protecting and feeding them, and providing healing balms for their injuries, but He risks personal injury protecting them from

vicious, attacking animals and thieves. This was not a job for a hireling whose interests were entirely selfish. Those who hear His voice and come to Him find goodness.

"I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). The life Jesus brings is primarily eternal life, the indestructible life of resurrection. For those who believe in Christ, death is defeated. Yes, there may be a physical termination ("even if he dies" - verse 25), but Christ has the authority and power to use His voice to call forth "all who are in the tombs." They "will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29). The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead moments later verified the truth of His words. By faith, obeying the Lord into a relationship with Him will be as if death does not exist.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This attention-getting declaration is an antecedent to what follows: "no one comes to the Father but through Me." Man's common response to this narrow statement is rejection. As "the way," Jesus is our bridge of access to the Father (cf. Ephesians 2:18). Christ is the embodiment and fullness of truth (all reality, and nothing of Satan's lies, John 8:44). Only truth makes men free (John 8:32), and "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36). Further, the Father and the Son have life (John 5:26). "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes." (John 5:21). Jesus Christ is the only answer to man's need for a way to the saving Father.

"I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 5). Branches do not have life, except as they draw it from the vine. Such an illustration describes the intimate relationship of Jesus and His disciples. As His "Father is the vinedresser", owning and caring for the vineyard, His primary concern is bearing fruit. Disregard, neglect and selfish sins of a branch will cause the vinedresser to take it away, to throw it away and, as dried up branches, to be burned up in fire. The Father cleanses and purifies all branches that abide in the Vine so that a maximum fruit yield will result.

Through all of these descriptions, Jesus is declaring that He is the Son of God, and as such, offers men exactly what men need: forgiveness of sins, life in Christ among other believers, and eternal life in heaven with Him after physical death. Do these descriptions serve as affirmation to you that you abide in Christ?

- Gary Smalley

- * "Criticism is something one can avoid by saying nothing, doing nothing and BELIEVING NOTHING!"
 - * "Clean living takes a lot more than soap and detergents!"
 - * "The best ammunition misses the mark if the aim is bad!"
 - * "Some people want religion simply as a kind of fire escape!"
 - * "Do not regret growing old; it is a privilege many do not have!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)