

Faith and Patience - The Power Connection

Hebrews 6.11-15

“..do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (v12)

Whenever you look through the pages of the New Testament you'll see two power forces at work together, these are identified in our verse today - faith and patience.

Faith requires action to be perfected, it requires works, otherwise it is a dead faith. “faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead... ⁽²⁰⁾ but do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead” James 2.17,20

These works are not works of the flesh although they might involve a practical 'fleshly' element. The works he's talking about here is acting on the word. Let me give you a simple illustration

Years ago, my father told of his teenage days growing up in the church. It was in the days prior to using technology in the services, such as microphones and projection software for songs. The church was a small Pentecostal church with enough hymn-books for each person to have one. Week after week the church gathered to pray for revival, believing God to answer their prayers, yet they saw no fruit. One evening during prayer, someone prompted by the Holy Spirit stood up and said, 'we've been praying for revival for God to add to the church but we don't have enough hymn books for the new people that God is going to send in, I believe we should buy more'. They did, and very soon new people started to come along.

Their faith was in operation praying for revival, their works were a practical application based on a word of wisdom. This perfected their faith and they began to see results.

I've been involved in prayer-lines and praying for sick over the years of ministry. People come with faith to be healed and oftentimes there's need for a practical application – they're asked to start doing something that they couldn't do or was difficult to be done before.

So where does patience fit in to this?

Patience under-girds and strengthens our faith. When faith begins to be tested, patience comes to its aid. Let's explain this from scripture

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ⁽³⁾ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁽⁴⁾ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”
James 1.2-4

Contrary to popular belief, patience is not 'knuckling under' and being satisfied just waiting until things improve, nor is it just tolerating something in some passive way – that's the way the world understands it!

The Biblical definition of patience is 'being constant and consistent, being the same way at all times, doing what needs to be done regardless of the outward circumstances'.

Patience is the outworking of our faith. It gives faith endurance to persevere until the answer comes.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is believing that trials and tribulations develop faith – the only thing that develops our faith is the Word of God
"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Romans 10.17

We have just seen that the "testing of our faith produces patience" (James 1.3)

Trials and tribulations develop patience

Hebrews 6.11-15

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that to prevent our faith from becoming sluggish we should imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. He draws an example from the life of Abraham and says that he obtained the promise after he had patiently endured.

In Genesis 12 God speaks His promise to Abram

- Abram starts out well believing God, He moves from Haran to Canaan.
- His faith wavers during famine and moves down to Egypt
- He later returns to Canaan
- He's becoming sluggish in his faith and tries to fulfill the promise of God himself through Hagar.
- God changes his name to Abraham, the father of many nations. Now every time he says his name he's putting what God said about him on his lips. He's making confession, developing patience by speaking consistently the word of God over his life.
- His life changes – Romans 4.18-21

Pregnant woman - you ever been around an expectant mother, who is eagerly awaiting the birth of her child. Everything she talks about is to do with the progress of her pregnancy.

- She will show you the picture of the ultrasound scan,
- preparations are made in the home, baby-proofing it, painting and decorating the spare room,
- she purchases all the things she's going to need like nappies
- she has great delight in giving you details of the size of the 'bump' - it's the size of a nut, an orange.
- She counts down the weeks till her 'due date'
- She also mixes and talks with other pregnant women. Her whole language and life revolves around her baby.

That's how we are meant to be with the things that we are standing in faith for - we should talk about it, mix with like-minded people, and live out our life in the earnest expectation that we are about to 'give birth' to our miracle.

That's patience, putting God's word on our lips and confessing it, consistently doing what we know is right to do.

“So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. ⁽²³⁾ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says." Mark 11.22-23

The keys words in this verse are 'faith' 'believe' and 'say' – patience operates through words – specifically God's words.

Malta -

- In early 2013 God put on our hearts about going to live and serve Him in Malta. We had connections there and had been many times but until that point never thought about living there.
- So we sought Him in prayer and waited on Him about it, God gave us 'words' and scriptures and we concluded that He was definitely calling us to go to Malta. At the time I was in the habit of keeping a diary, and so kept a journal every time the Lord spoke to us, every verse He used to 'call' us or confirm His word.
- Once we had determined this was the right move, our whole language changed, our life changed – all we spoke about was Malta, I changed the wallpaper on my laptop to reflect Malta. We stepped back from pastoral ministry in preparation and to allow us to travel.
- Over the next few months God spoke direct words to us and these were journalled. We sold our house, loaded all our belongings onto a shipping container and eventually left the UK on 4 October. On the day of completion, the buyers requested an extra week to finalise everything. We agreed, handed the keys to the solicitor and flew out to Malta that evening with enough money to last about 3 weeks. That extra week turned out to be two, then three, four, five, six. By this time we were struggling financially, we couldn't afford to keep up the rent, had no money for food or to buy anything for Christmas which was fast approaching.
- Doubts began to creep in – Did we make the right decision? Had we indeed heard from God? We spent days weeping, soul-searching, praying. We started to look for ways to return to UK, looking at flights etc.
- Our faith was beginning to waver, but patience stepped in. We went back through the journal over every word and promise that we had received. We consistently declared that we had been called to Malta, we encouraged ourselves, but it was tough.
- Five days before Christmas, exactly 11 weeks after we left the UK. We were down to our last €2, it was about 4pm on the Friday, I went out to buy a loaf of bread and litre of milk. When I returned to the apartment a few minutes later, Jayne met me on the stairs in a tearful state – the solicitor had called to say the buyers had completed and we would have the money before the close of business that day. We wept for joy and praised God. But no money came over. Monday 23 December we contacted the solicitor, she got back to us later that day - there had been a small misunderstanding which was resolved the next day (she worked Christmas Eve just for us) – the money landed in our account.

Bethany - our return to UK in Sept 2019;

- Oct 2020 God gave us a promise about our children, we displayed this on the mantelpiece – a couple of days later Jo kicked out;
- Case in March - told not to have much hope, but he surrendered. Residency terms were to be given in May – but then he decided to fight.
- Case set for August – told again we were likely to lose.
- Every 'evidence' we submitted was dismissed by the solicitor – we held firm to the promise and encouraged ourselves, doing what was needed, allowing patience to have its perfect work in us.
- Against all the professionals views and advice the case went our way – we have Bethany with us today

Hebrews 10.35-36

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence [*faith*] which has great reward. For you have need of endurance [*patience*] so that after you have done the will of God [*acted on the Word*], you may receive the promise”

- Do not cast away your confidence – your confidence is your faith.

The waiting can be disheartening and discouraging especially when everything looks contrary. This may cause our faith to waver

It's so easy to quit and give up during this time but then you'll never see the reward.

“..let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” Galatians 6.9

Don't cast off your confidence

- You have need of endurance – when our faith is tested this is where patience is developed.

Patience gives us the staying power to last to the end. We shall reap if we do not grow weary in our doing good and lose heart

- After you have done the will of God – this is your action on the Word of God

Patience continually confesses the promises/word of God -

God told Joshua to keep His words on their lips, and to be careful to observe all they contain (Joshua 1.8). This would make their ways prosperous and successful.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised)” Hebrews 10.23 (AV)

Faith with works becomes effective in bringing the manifestation of our faith to perfection.

So, faith and patience together is the power connection that keeps us strong and causes us to receive the promise.

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