

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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Be Patient With All

By Terry Bennett

I once attended a seminar where each attendee was given a lapel pin reading “PBP GINF WMY”. We later learned that these letters stood for: “Please Be Patient. God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.”

Patience is a virtue we admire in others. We are usually patient with ourselves and want others to be patient with us as well. However, many times we seem to excuse ourselves for a lack of patience with others. Perhaps this quote hits close to home: “Patience is something you admire in the driver behind you, but not in the one ahead.”

The history of the nation of Israel clearly exhibits the patience of Almighty God. Time after time the Israelites disobeyed Jehovah by turning to idols like the nations around them. Time after time God punished them and sent a messenger to draw them back to Him. Although the Israelites would eventually recognize their condition and return to God, it was rarely long before the cycle of disobedience-rejection-punishment-repentance-return would start anew.

We also see God’s patience in dealing with each one of us. No matter how many times we sin – no matter how often we choose to put our own desires ahead of His – no matter how frequently we reject His gifts and willfully choose to separate ourselves from Him, God is patiently waiting for us to return to Him. Picture the father watching for the prodigal son. “But when he was yet a great way off,

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his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” (Lk 15:20). I Corinthians 13:4 describes love as longsuffering (patient). Can you see the love of God in the patience He displays with us? We reject and provoke Him, yet He patiently waits for us to recognize the kindly effects of His love. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (II Pet 3:9). “Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him.” (Isa 30:18).

As the apostle Paul prayed for the patience of the Christians at Colosse (Col 1:9-11), let each of us lift his voice to God asking for patience for ourselves and for our fellow brethren. But let us realize also that the answer to such prayers – the development of greater patience – may come through facing more trials (Rom 12:12). Richard Cecil wrote, “God’s way of answering the Christian’s prayer for more patience, experience, hope and love often is to put him into the furnace of affliction.” James put it this way: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4). As fire removes the impurities from gold, let us remember that trials strengthen us by removing the impurities from our faith (I Pet 1:7). Enduring trials builds our patience, strengthens our character and resolve, and provides a brighter vision of our hope (Rom 5:3-5). As our faith is expressed in work, our love is expressed in labor, and our hope is expressed in patience (I Thess 1:3). Our patience is also improved by meditation upon the word of God.

Impatience is borne of selfishness – of looking after our own desires rather than the needs of others. We show our love for others when we are patient with them. This does not

mean accepting when they are wrong but tenderly teaching and encouraging them to follow the Lord.

It pays to be patient! Hebrews 6:12 admonishes us to “imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Paul writes that eternal life will be given “to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Rom 2:7). Let each of us “be patient with all” (I Thess 5:14) and “bear fruit with patience” (Lk 8:15) as we walk together day by day.

A TEENAGER’S PRAYER

(From Lafayette Height Daily Devotional)

God in heaven, I am young and I don’t understand what its like to be a parent, but it must be very hard because so many people are failing at these days. I pray for Mom and Dad, God, that You will help them be good parents, strong in the ways that you want them to be so I can look up to them in admiration and feel confident that their instruction is right. Help me dear Lord to understand my parents. Remind me that when I don’t get my way, it is because they love me and not because they want to be mean or deprive me of good times. Help me God when I become stubborn and refuse to listen, to accept the fact that they have wisdom and experiences, because they were once teenagers, but I have never been a parent. Put in my heart the respect and consideration they deserve for their years of hard work and sacrifice, they raised me the best they could. Let me not repay them with grief or shame. Rather, help me to give them obedience, respect, forgiveness, and above all love. Most of all God, while I still have my parents here on earth, help me to appreciate them and let them know that I do.

In Jesus precious name,

Amen

This prayer was written by a teenager and sent to her parents while she was away from home. It shows great maturity and spiritual insight. If you’re a teenager why not read it again meditating upon the thoughts therein. If a parent, why not read it again and see if you are trying to instill these values in your children. We can all benefit from this simple prayer.

-- John A. Smith (preacher at Lafayette Heights)