

The Test of Patience

Tests of God #2: The Test of Patience
Genesis 6:3, 11-16, 22 and Hebrews 11:7

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. For the Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him. He will never forsake the righteous nor leave their children begging for bread.

About this time each year, a test of God begins in our lives in Vero Beach, Florida and usually lasts until Easter. But unlike the Test of Willingness, people can visibly observe us taking this test. They observe us taking this test at any drive through restaurant window not named Chick-fila. They see us taking this test while in the 10 Items or Less Line in Publix 10 when the person in front of us has more than 10 items. And they spot us taking this test at the intersection of 27th and 60th when we are waiting for that anathema of a red light to permit us to turn left some time this century. It is that Test of God that makes us want to remove our Christian decals from our back bumpers. And it is that Test of God that we sincerely hope and pray no one we know well sees us taking while we are in the process of taking it. It's called the Test of Patience. Some may call patience a virtue. But I call patience that virtue that I admire in the driver behind me. But I loathe in the driver in front of me.

So important is the subject of patience for the people of God that the writers of the Scriptures address it in detail more than 70 times. Solomon informs us that a "hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but a patient one calms a quarrel" (Prv 15:18). David tells us that "he waited patiently for the Lord" (Ps 40:1). Because he did, God lifted him "out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire" (Ps 40:2). Paul tells us love is "patient and kind. It does not envy nor boast. And it is not proud." And Jesus himself was the perfect example of patience. He had to be. After all, He penned the hope for all of humanity on 12 ordinary disciples who often got things wrong in the Gospels more than they got right.

Well today, church, my objective is not to tell you everything the Bible tells us about patience in such and such a chapter and in such and such a verse. I think we can all agree that the reason the subject of patience comes up so much is because we don't have a lot of it. And when we do decide to ask for it, we tell the Lord "Give me patience and give it to me right now." My objective, instead, is to show you how God goes about developing it in your life and most definitely mine. He does that not through a Test of Willingness. He does it through a Test of Patience. In every Test of Patience, (1) There is a reason. Noah: "a flood is coming because the wickedness of the human race has become great on earth. Therefore, I want you to build an ark." (2) There is resolve. Noah: "The flood isn't coming for 120 years. But it is coming, I'll assure you." (3) There is a requirement. Noah: "Even though the world will continue to grow in wickedness for the 120 years that you are constructing this ark, I command you to make it according to my precise specifications. (3) There is a reward. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. And in so doing became an heir of righteousness that only comes by faith." And we are going to see that Test of Patience at work in the life of Noah in the Book of Genesis and Hebrews. But first, pray with me.

1. There is a Reason (Gen 6:11-13)

- **Turn. Turn. Turn.** (1) Some years ago, there was a popular song that adorned the radio waves by the Byrds taken straight out of the Book of Ecclesiastes. It went like this: "to everything turn, turn, turn. There is a season. Turn. Turn. Turn. And a time to every purpose under heaven. (2) In some tests, God's reasons are only known to Him. (3) But in a Test of Patience, God often makes known the reason known. For patience involves a delay in some for or fashion. And when there's a provident delay, you already know what it is that's being delayed.
- ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth."
- **The Four-Fold Connection in Genesis 6:** In Genesis 6, there are 4 different narratives that come together to make one of the most famous biblical stories: (a) The Narrative about a Decision God Made – Because of the great wickedness of the human race, I will wipe from the face of the earth what I have made. It's a narrative of creation and recreation. (b) The Narrative of Noah – "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." Noah wasn't perfect. Genesis 9 informs us that he had a pretty serious drinking problem that led to some extremely tragic consequences. But what made him favorable in the eyes of God is that in spite of his flaws, he believed God and obeyed Him. That's called faith. And it

is the only way we can please God. (c) The Narrative of God's Instructions to Noah: - "Build an ark." (d) The Narrative of the Flood Itself – For 40 days and 40 nights.

- **The Four-Fold Narrative Reveals Why God Required Patience:** God made a decision. It was a decision Noah knew about but the rest of the world did not. And as the wickedness continued to increase, Noah might have even said "when oh Lord?" God gave him a directive. It was clear directive and would take considerable time to carry out in the midst of the wickedness. God did something. He sent a flood just as he said. Not immediately. But in his time. God rewarded someone – It wasn't a reward that would be instantaneous. It was a reward that was delayed and required great patience to attain.
- **For Us:** "Let us know grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal 6:9).

2. There is Resolve (Gen 6:3)

- **Lincoln Logs:** (1) There is one toy I remember as a child that I wish toy makers would bring back: Lincoln Logs; (2) Lincoln Logs were designed, in part, to test the resolve and ingenuity of the child playing with them. (2) When you opened the box, it contained only pieces they called logs. As a result, every child that ever played with them had a decision to make: (a) to build something that would take some time; or (b) to leave them in the box. (2) The Test of Patience will always require resolve from you. It did for Noah.
- ³ *Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."*
- **The Years Between the Call and the Completion:** (1) You don't have to be a biblical scholar to know how long it took Noah to build the ark. We can deduce how long it took from this verse: (a) Their days will be 120 years. (b) Then, following this verse, we get God's decision to send a flood and the Lord's call to Noah to build an ark. (2) 120 years passed between the call and the completion. That required resolve on Noah's part.
- **The Resolve God Required in Noah:** (1) It Was Spiritual: God's pronounced to Noah that the earth was increasing in wickedness. That means it would continue to increase in wickedness for the entirety of the time he was building the ark. It would continue to grow and grow in wickedness. (2) It Subjected Him to Ridicule: Noah lived in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. That's an arid, dry area with not a lot of water. And he's building an ark. For 120 years, his life was devoted to that purpose, during a time of increasing wickedness, in the middle of a barren desert, between two rivers, not beside them. That required resolve. (3) It Was Strenuous: Not only did the Lord tell Moses to build it out of acacia wood, he told him to bring into the ark two of all living creatures. That also required resolve.
- **For Us:** Is the same as it was for Noah: Conviction leads to resolve. And resolve leads to action. And patience is the crucible God uses to bring them in our lives.

3. There is a Requirement (6:14-16, 22)

- **Christian Herter** – (1) There was once a governor of Massachusetts by the name of Christian Herter who arrived at a church BBQ fresh off the campaign trail trying to win a 2nd term. (2) When he moved down the serving line, one particular lady only put one piece of chicken on his plate. (3) It prompted a question from Governor Herter: "Excuse me, do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?" (4) "Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm under strict orders to give one piece of chicken to each person." (4) "Do you know who I am? I am the governor of this state," Herter responded. (5) To which she responded: "Do you know who I am? I am the lady in charge of the chicken. So, move along, mister." (6) Noah obeyed because he knew God was in charge of the chicken.
- **God Required Noah to Build a Secure Ark (6:14):** ¹⁴ *So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.* Cypress (Gopher) wood would not rot and the "pitch" was tar that kept the water out. This word "pitch" is where we get the word "atonement." Jesus is the atonement for our sin, and in Him, no flood of judgment can get to you.
- **God Required Noah to Build a Sufficient Ark (6:15):** ¹⁵ *This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.* 300 X 50 X 30 cubits equates to 3 million cubic feet. There was room on that ark to be saved. And there is room at the cross to be saved as well.
- **God Required Noah to Build a Special Ark (6:16):** ¹⁶ *Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^[e] high all around.^[f] Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.* Archaeologists tell

us these were the specifications used to make ancient tombs though on a smaller scale, one that featured a door that God would seal during the flood. During God's judgment, Noah went into the tomb. God sealed the door. And he came out after the flood of judgment was over. Christ was in the tomb. The door was sealed. And after 3 days, up from the grave he arose.

- **And Noah Obeyed (6:22):** *Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*
- **For Us:** We obey in a Test of Patience because, like the instructions in the building of the ark, the Lord is painting a much bigger story with his commands than we can think, ask, or imagine.

4. There is a Reward (Heb. 11:7).

- **Will Jesus Find Us Watching?** When Jesus comes to reward His servants. Whether it be noon or night. Faithful to Him will He find us? Watching with our lamps all trimmed and bright? -- Fanny Crosby.
- ⁷*By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*
- **For Noah:** The Writer of Hebrews tells us clearly what patience allowed Noah to do: (a) to trust God's promises and (b) to believe His warnings. Consequently, his reward was not only a covenant relationship whereby God promised Him never to destroy the earth again. It was also the reward of an example for all of us as to what he looks for in us: faith demonstrated through patience.
- **For Us:** "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11). May we, like Noah, have the patience to know our Lord will certainly bring this about. Amen.