

# Advent'ageous Patience

## *Waiting Faithfully in Spite of Suffering*

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I'm Gabe, I grew up here at His Place, and I'm just a few months shy of getting my pastoral degree at Ozark Christian College. **Today we're talking about waiting faithfully in spite of our suffering.**

So: **Are you being patient with God?** Well, Christmas time has come and gone, but today and every day, we get to celebrate that the Lord's come near to us!



For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6 NIV



How amazing is it that God wrote Himself into our earthly story to save us from our sin! And isn't it cool that since Jesus came, we don't have hardship, suffering, pain, or death anymore? Well... we all know this isn't true, of course. As the Psalmist wrote, long before Jesus:



We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Awake, Lord! Why do You sleep? Rouse Yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our misery and oppression? Rise up and help us; **[which Jesus has now done]** rescue us because of Your unfailing love. – Psalms 44:22-26 NIV



At times, it feels like God's silent and doesn't hear us. Like the Psalmist, we can feel as though God isn't acting when we think He should, which makes it hard to live in this space, knowing Christ has come but feeling trapped in a fallen world. **Illness** didn't get packed up and put away on December 26th. **Grief** didn't get shoveled off the driveway. **Anxiety** didn't get thrown out along with all the wrapping paper. **Suffering** didn't walk out the door along with your friends and family. Instead, our unanswered prayers are louder than before since the chaos of family festivities and Mariah Carey no longer drown them out. So, my question today is: **Are you being patient?**

I like to think of myself as a patient person, at least when it comes to grocery store lines and traffic. But I'm not asking you how well you tolerate daily inconveniences; I'm asking: **Are you being patient in suffering?** In other words: **Are you being patient with God?** Cuz' it's His plan, not ours. And, suffering is never fun, but is a necessary part of His plan for our life.



No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. – Hebrews 12:11 NIV



The good news of suffering is that it leads to growth! I've recently picked up a new discipline that's brought a lot of suffering and impatience: running! I hate every second of it, and I can't wait until it's over, but I'm thankful for the growth it brings.

So, if I want to be in better physical shape, I shouldn't avoid running. The same applies to all suffering. **If we want to be in better spiritual shape, we shouldn't try to avoid suffering.**



So, what do we do when we've just celebrated the birth of Jesus, but we're still living in the suffering? The answer is, "Be Patient." Now, patience doesn't ignore pain or try to avoid the hard parts of life, but rather trusts God while walking through life's struggles with Him. We should remember the themes of Advent while practicing patience. So, "What's Advent?" Well, long story short, it's a long-standing celebration and a season of joyful anticipation leading up to the birth of Christ. The four weeks of Advent celebrate Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, each represented with a candle, and a fifth candle representing Jesus.

This is where things like candlelight service come from! Advent shows us that patience has always been, and will always be, built into God's overall plan. So, we ought to be patient the way the Lord taught us: and patience ought to be shaped by hope, joy, peace, and love.

So, **Advent patience is hopeful**, and we hope in the waiting because God is faithful.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had – Romans 15:4-5 NIV

This **Advent patience is joyful** and flows naturally out of hope.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. – Romans 12:12 NIV

This **Advent patience is peaceful**, and this peace grows as we trust more in God's timing.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

And this **Advent patience is loving**, and this love reflects God's patience with us.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. – 1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV

Advent isn't just about the arrival of Jesus, though; **it's also about longing for Him** to return! God's been training His Church to wait patiently for thousands of years and He's always teaching His people to be patient as He works in the world and in their lives.

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. – Romans 8:24-25 NIV

Jesus Himself showed us how advent'ageous patience can be. He entered the world as a baby and had to grow up just like the rest of us.



He reigned eternally in heaven, outside of time, and decided of His own will to enter our world and live by the rules on this side of heaven. He lived not just as God in the flesh, but as a man who had to navigate His way through 30 or so years of regular life before beginning His ministry.

So, **if patience was necessary for Jesus', it's necessary for us, too.** Cuz' His life was our perfect example of how to live So, if it's in His life – it should be in our life. Even the things we see that we don't like! **Jesus felt pain. He suffered. He cried** when his friend died. **He was grieved** when another friend betrayed Him. He was arrested for crimes he didn't commit. **He was beaten. He was mocked** and slandered publicly. And **He died** in the most shameful way imaginable.

Jesus experienced these things because we experience these things. So, we endure these things cuz' He endured these things. Even today, Christians should be prepared to patiently suffer just like Jesus did. We will always face earthly pain and cultural pressures that make it hard to be patient in our faith, especially since this world is so impatient with us and our faith in Christ.

Many people, myself included, pray time and again for Jesus to spare them from pain and suffering. "God, please heal my illness... Please remove this struggle from my life... Make grief of loss go away... Remove my sadness and cure my loneliness... why haven't you fulfilled my deepest longing?... **When will the pain stop?!**" This isn't wrong or bad, but it misses the point of what God is offering us. God's not offering us an easier life free of suffering; He's offering us a life of bigger purpose and greater joy in spite of suffering. Paul puts it best when he tells the Corinthians:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

Even when we have no clue whatsoever as to what God is doing, we can rest in the truth that **suffering leaves us but God never does.** As Paul said another time to the Romans:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. – Romans 8:28 NIV

There are few passages that I find more difficult to come to terms with than this one. I love God, and I long to serve and please Him, but it's hard, and it highlights my impatience when things don't go along with what I perceive as good. To be vulnerable (and risk being mopey) for a moment, second only to serving and loving Jesus, there's nothing I desire more than to be a husband and a father.



I want to love and serve my future family so that we can be examples of Christ-like love to a broken and hurting world. As a 23-year-old man who really wants a family of his own, I had hoped this part of my life would've started by now. But it hasn't, and I'm currently lacking the key pieces to this puzzle. (So, if you know of anyone...).

More seriously, though, I'm sure others in this room feel the same way about something, and you know that to feel this way hurts. It makes it hard to be patient. However, even when we're suffering and feel forgotten, confused, and hurt, God's call to trust in Him and be patient remains the same. We don't always have to know how God is working to trust in what He's doing. We need to trust God at all times, no matter what.

But **we cannot expect God to rescue us from every painful thing in this life.** God the Father did not spare His own Son from suffering, pain, or death; so, we should not expect to be spared from what God Himself entered into, which He did out of love and to rescue us from our sin. Despite this, however, there is hope to be found through our patience and suffering.



**The only thing that the Father did spare Jesus from was the grave.**

And that is the same thing He promises to spare us from, too! We will suffer, just like Jesus suffered. And we will die, just like Jesus died.

But through faith in Christ—a patient, trusting, enduring faith—our stories can end the same way Jesus' did, walking out of the tombs that were meant to hold us so we can instead be held in the arms of our Father. Back in his letter to the Romans, Paul says:

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? ... Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: **[in the Psalm we read earlier, and Paul now quotes]** “For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. — Romans 8:32-37 NIV

See? No matter how much suffering we experience in this life, we have a much greater, eternal life to look forward to with Christ! Therefore, **let your faith in God be a patient and trusting faith.**

Even when it hurts, remain faithful and work through your suffering, like Jesus did, rather than trying to run away from it. When you're bogged down by pain that won't go away, or when you're begging God to bring your prayers to fruition, pray as Jesus prayed:

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.” — Matthew 26:39 NIV

So, I'll ask again: **Are you being patient with God?**

Are you trusting His plan no matter what cup gets passed your way? Cuz' it's all going according to His plan, not ours. And His plan is so much better than we could imagine.

**We just have to wait hopefully, joyfully, peacefully, lovingly, and oh-so patiently.**