

[The God of Patience](#)

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Often when I listen to believers the impression is that God has no patience. God seems ready with a giant hammer to squash us at the first opportune moment. God is watching over you and as soon as you slip up down it comes in which ever form He deems best for the committed crime. Perhaps this is the desire (secretly of course) of many believers when it comes to the next person, surely not themselves due to their outstanding righteousness. And of course at the end, the unbeliever must surely be eternally punished.

How do we continue in faith and fear at the same time? This is certainly how many believers live. For one, many do not understand reconciliation or forgiveness. Many also still hold to works and the need to constantly “perform” as righteously as humanly possible. How many of us are looking over our shoulders with every step wondering if we are on the straight and narrow, afraid of the slightest mis-step? Too many!

I would like to call attention to a few men in scriptures that God worked with. The first is Adam, the first man. Where did God show patience to Adam? Wasn't Adam shown the exit to Eden? Didn't God curse Adam? God even cursed Eve.

Genesis 2:16-17 NRSV

(16) And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
(17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Well, we know the rest of this story. Eve listens to the serpent and eats the fruit with Adam. How long did Adam live? A very, very, very, long time.

Genesis 5:5 NRSV

(5) Thus all the days that Adam lived were *nine hundred thirty years*; and he died.

Nine hundred and thirty years! That was one very long day! Day? Yes, God told Adam he would die *the day* he ate the fruit. Were those 930 years one day? What about all of the days everyone else was living? There were 339,450 modern days that Adam walked the earth! 339,450 days of patience. God changed His mind; He showed amazing mercy and grace towards Adam. I personally believe this to be our first glimpse of the incredible grace of God, and the idea that His patience is so much more than we can understand.

God could have decided right then and there that the project of creation, regarding humankind, was not worth the effort. But, He did not. God chose to allow Adam and Eve to live even though He declared that if they ate of the tree they would die; in *that* day.

Psalms 103:8 NRSV

(8) The LORD is merciful and gracious, *slow to anger* and abounding in steadfast love.

Genesis 12:1-3 NRSV

(1) Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

(2) I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

(3) I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:7 NRSV

(7) Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Abram left his home and traveled to a land that God showed him. No small feat in Abram's day! God told Abram that He would make a great nation of Abram's offspring. We know the history, how long did it take for Abram to have Issac? Did Abram doubt? Did he question?

Genesis 15:1-5 NRSV

(1) After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

(2) But Abram said, "*O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?*"

(3) *And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir."*

(4) But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir."

(5) He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Abram doubts, and sarcastically at that!

Genesis 16:1-4 NRSV

(1) Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar,

(2) and Sarai said to Abram, "*You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.*" And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

(3) So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife.

(4) He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.

Sarai now tells Abram that the God, who sent them into another land and promised you an heir to begin a great nation, *has prevented me* from having children. What does Abram do? Does he tell his beautiful wife, 'no, God will follow through'? No, instead he decides to slap God upside the face and do it the human way, 'our way', 'my way'.

Genesis 17:17 NRSV

(17) *Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"*

I find this passage to be fully loaded! Explosive! Abraham fell on his face, as one would do when the Almighty conversed with you. But...Abraham laughed! It says Abraham spoke to himself; I imagine this as when we say something under our breath, in ear shot of another as we truly intend them to hear and then deny the very words we just spoke! I can tell you when my teenage son, as teens are apt to do, does this to me my blood boils! But what does God do? Strike Abraham dead for divine insubordination? Patience.

Genesis 18:9-15 NRSV

(9) They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent."

(10) Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.

(11) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

(12) So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

(13) The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'"

(14) Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son."

(15) But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

Here is another excellent passage. Sarah, like her husband, laughs at God! She is even called out on her self-humorous lack of faith. "Oh yes, you did laugh". Was Sarah stricken dead? Patience.

It would be easy to believe that God was already too far into this plan to go back, God promised after all. This was all part of God's plan; He knew that both Abraham and Sarah would laugh. Did he? Did God *know* that Abraham was going to be the right father to Isaac to lead the great nation that God needed? Is it possible that God was enjoying the experience of a relationship? Could God have simply ended His plans and chose a couple that would not dare question His wisdom? That is the question. It is easy to say God is God and God does whatever God pleases! Nothing holds Him back! Certainly no mere mortals. But God made the decision that Abraham was the one and God never goes back and changes His mind. Really? Think that one through.

God showed incredible patience with Abraham. Incredible, steadfast love.

There are some other men who have been the recipients of God's wonderful patience as I will write of very soon! Does God become frustrated?

