

GROW

WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED!



GROW

WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED!

(Source: Christian Resources App > Audio Sermons > General Conventions > 2018 General Convention > “Nathan Austin – Grow Where You’re Planted”)

Grow Where You're Planted!

Introduction

I suspect that the gist of our thoughts here today is already apparent to you. Most of us are likely familiar with the phrase, “Grow where you're planted.” But I hope that you're still able to walk away with some new ideas, some thoughts to keep in mind for trying times, and hopefully with a couple connections that had not occurred to you.

Do we ever feel that we're not where we're supposed to be? Do we ever feel the grass is greener elsewhere? Do we perhaps feel that despite working diligently for us to do what is right, we don't earn that promotion or get that opportunity or the support, perhaps, we feel we need?

Well, we're not alone, brethren. I know I struggle with these feelings sometimes, and I would expect that some of you do as well. And I admit to being the tiniest bit jealous of those of you that just never seem to struggle with anything.

We're all aware of ***Romans 8:28, “And we know God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”***

But knowing that ‘God causes all things to work together for good’ and remembering that ‘God causes all things to work together for good’ are not the same thing. It is good for us to remember this and try to keep it close to our hearts, especially during the trying times.

We're going to look at some Biblical examples of people who had to “Grow where they were planted.”

Ruth

So we're going to begin with Ruth. I think she's kind of an easy pick. And so we first ask, just what was Ruth's struggle? I think some of it's easy. We think, well, she had to go with her mother-in-law. But have you ever considered what it must have been like for her to marry into a Jewish family?

We read in ***Ruth the first chapter, verses 3 – 5. “And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.”***

So much happens in just these few verses. First Elimelech dies, and then his two sons marry Moabite women. By the way, you're not really supposed to do that. There were strong prohibitions about marrying outsiders. And then 10 years later, both sons die as well. So here we have Ruth, newly widowed. She's married into a foreign family, and her mother-in-law decides it's time to return to her own people.

[So if you're Ruth, what do you do??!]

On the one hand, Naomi is family. On the other hand,

she's about to move back to Israel. They have strange customs there. They don't like foreigners. They really don't like foreign gods.



In fact, I think we can assume Ruth is still a relatively young woman. She's only been married 10 years. She has a lot of her life ahead of her. We're not told of any children at this point. So moving to Israel, she's basically writing off the rest of her life. She can have no expectations of another husband, or of anything familiar to her, except perhaps her mother-in-law Naomi.

Now, we can't presume to know what Ruth may have been thinking at this time, but you can imagine how someone in her position might have been tempted to stay. In fact, Naomi suggests that both of her daughters-in-law depart.

Ruth chapter 1, verses 11, 14 and 15. "And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law."

And we see that Orpah does exactly that. She goes, but that's not what Ruth does.

In the Scripture, we all know very well, Ruth 1:16 and 17. "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

In this circumstance, we see that Ruth was committed to her course. When we compare her actions to her sister-in-law, Orpah, which of the two took the easy path? And she wasn't coerced into this. In fact, Naomi made an attempt to tell her, 'don't, don't come with me.' But she persisted. We're not told of any grumbling. We read nothing of misery or dejection. Rather, she devotes herself to caring for her mother-in-law.

After returning to Judah, who is the one going out to the fields to glean? Ruth. This is a lowly task. It indicates

poverty. But she's not above it. She goes out and she does what she needs to do to take care of her family, at least what's left of it.

And though we're not told what her attitude was when she undertook this task, I think it's reasonable to assume she would perform this task as tenaciously as she accompanied her mother-in-law.

And if we choose to model ourselves after such tenaciousness, that's what matters.

And so now we ask you, in what ways can we endeavor to be more like Ruth?

Do we ever find ourselves faced with a choice to do the right thing, even though it may be personally challenging? We need to remember the example of Ruth and push through, performing our tasks willingly, even with joy in our hearts.

Might we ever find that serving our brethren or serving our family comes at great personal cost? We need to bear in mind that it is still the right thing to do. We always know we must fight the flesh. That's no surprise. When we're tempted to murmur and feel sorry for our condition, we might strive to pull out this memory of Ruth and her strong character and lean on that when the flesh tempts us with the easy path. She could do it. We can do it.

Ruth left an example of strength and did what was necessary despite the difficulties involved. In the end, she was greatly blessed for doing the right thing.

Esther

Esther was another example of a strong character.

We know she was orphaned at a young age. We don't know much about it, but we do know she was raised, not by her mother and father. And then as a teenager, she's given over to the king as a potential bride. Now, first of all, let's try to lay aside our modern-day cultural baggage about arranged marriages or marriages with a very diverse age. Even forgetting that, this is no picnic for Esther.

Ahasuerus was an angry king. Got a temper. And as a king, he could react with impunity. We know he banished his first wife. History tells us that one loyal supporter, by the name of Pythias, entertained the king on his way to invade Greece. When the supporter offered funds to support the war, the king politely declined and instead rewarded Pythias with a gift of gold to increase his own fortune. So therefore, he felt encouraged. He had an ear with the king. So the same supporter then asked a favor of the king, to which the king agreed. By the way, it would seem it would be a bad idea to agree before you know just what you're agreeing to. So when Pythias asked that his eldest son be released from military service to care for him in his old age, Ahasuerus's anger burst forth. He had sacrificed his own family, regardless of their ties to the king, and he would not condone an exception in this case either. Nevertheless, since he had already agreed, he released his son from military service, then had him cut in half and posted on either side of the road and marched the army between as they went off to war. I'm not sure what

lesson he intended to provide here, other than to be very careful when you ask the king for anything.

But the point we'd like to make here is, Esther is supposed to marry this man. This is more than just a temper. It's a ticking time bomb. So now she becomes a part of the group, and you can only imagine the infighting there must have been with hundreds of women vying for the attention of the king. I don't pretend to have watched it, but we have a modern-day version of this on television, "The Bachelor!" And although I have no doubt there is a degree of staged drama for television, I also have no doubt that with potentially hundreds of women in competition for a lucrative prize like the king, politeness and honorable behavior were not the order of the day.

But she gets through this, and she marries the king, and then life becomes easy, right? Nope. Now she gets shoved back into the discomfort zone by having to play a central role in stopping Haman's plotting against the Jews. Consider this. She's now maybe 20. She's already gone through a lot. And now she has to somehow outmaneuver the king's most trusted advisor. She has to play it just right because if she missteps and offends the king, who knows what could happen? Banishment is the best thing that could happen.

And faced with all of these challenges, what does she do? Does she curl up in a ball? Does she run away? Or maybe she decides, 'I'm done with this, and I'm just going to enjoy myself.' Instead, she recognizes God's leading. Faced with all

these challenges, she, at first hesitated, but then acts with the encouragement of her uncle Mordecai. Rather than enjoying a royal life of luxury she recognized God's leading. It was made clear to her through the words of Mordecai that she was there for a purpose.

The fourth chapter of Esther, verses 13 and 14, "Mordecai replied to Esther, Do not imagine that you and the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this."



And then we come to one of my favorite moments of this story. Certainly, after prayerful consideration, Esther realizes that clearly her circumstances are not mere

happenstance. If ever there was leading of the Lord, this was it. And so, we continue to read Esther's reply to Mordecai. She gave meaningful instructions to her people.

“Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus, I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.” – Esther 4:16

She recognizes her responsibility. Esther certainly didn't enjoy the thought of approaching the mercurial king, but when faced with a difficult situation like this, is there any use in bemoaning her fate? Would fighting it change anything? Instead, she clears her mind, her own will, her conscience, and moves forward along the path the Lord intended for her.

Doing Right

Once again, we have a lesson of doing right even in troubling circumstances.

Jesus said, ***“Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow shall take care of itself” (Matthew 6:33, 34).*** Each day has enough trouble of its own. So, do what is right today.

Of course, we struggle to recognize just what the Lord's will is for us. We attempt to open the doors before us, and sometimes they open, sometimes not. Sometimes they conspire in such a way as to give us little choice. No matter

how it goes, when we feel directed by circumstances outside our control, it does us no good to complain or fight against it.

We are not told that Esther complained. Instead, as she did, we need to prayerfully commune with the Lord. We need to do our best to determine his will. This is an important thing whenever we are looking for direction, especially when confronted with challenging experiences. When the Lord's will becomes clearer, we should move forward, without grumbling or second-guessing, trusting that He will overrule and care for us.

Jonah

Jonah was not one of my first choices for growing where you're planted, because it's not so much about where he was planted, it's where he had tried to avoid being planted. He's perhaps the single best example the Bible gives us for fighting against God's intended will and plan. God was in the process of planting Jonah in Nineveh, but Jonah did not want to be planted there!

Jonah was directed by God to preach to the people of Ninevah. But Jonah felt they did not deserve to hear the word of the Lord and should rather be destroyed. With this attitude he made himself their judge. How fascinating that Jonah's trial was letting go of his personal judgment against the sinning people.

Do we ever fight God's direction for us? Do you ever get the distinct impression that God wants you to go this

direction? But you really want to go the other way. And furthermore, do we ever have the urge to do God's judging for him?

I'm not saying we all go around pointing accusing fingers, but it is an aspect of human nature to make assumptions about the character and motivations of others. And it's altogether too easy to be convinced that we know the hard attitude of another. And so, this lesson of Jonah is to not give into this temptation and to not fight the direction in which he leads us. We are handed tools and talents, opportunities, and lessons. Our only job is to do them to the best of our ability. God will handle his part without any intervention from us.

Joseph

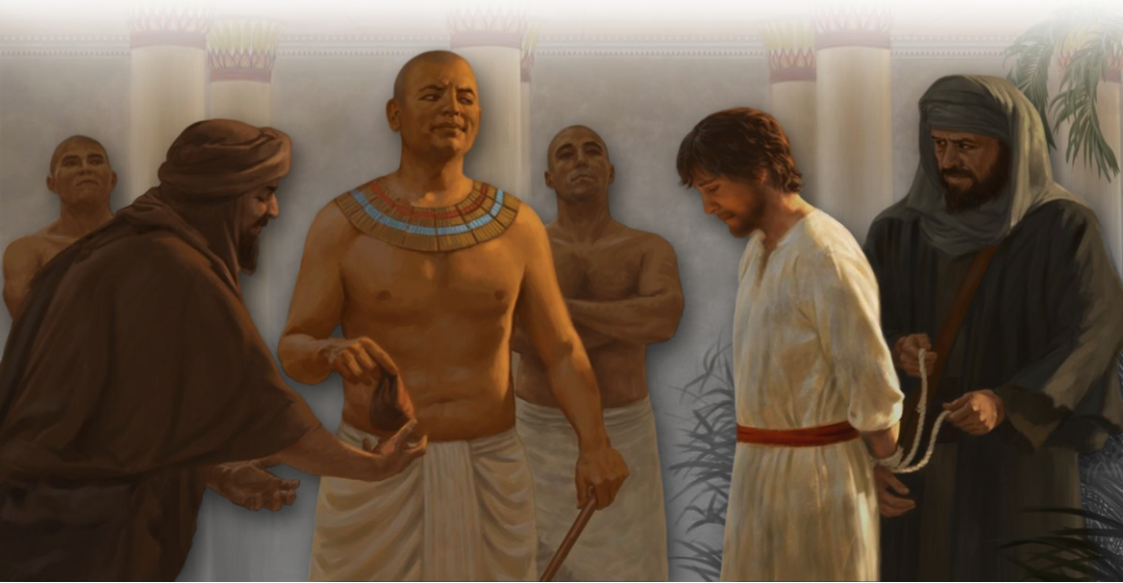
For another excellent example of growing where you're planted, we turn to Joseph. Let's first enumerate his struggles and we'll dig through all of them, not just the most obvious. First, he is decidedly different from his brothers. He dreams with a capital D, and when he shares his dreams, he is at best ridiculed and at worst persecuted by his siblings. He is even rebuffed by his father.

Genesis chapter 37, verses 5 to 10. "Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, please listen to this dream which I have had. For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and stood erect, and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to

my sheaf. Then his brother said to him, are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Now he had still another dream and related it to his brothers and said lo, I have had still another dream. You think you'd get tired of telling them this, this is not going well. And behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me. He related it to his father and to his brothers, and his father rebuked him and said to him, what is this dream you've had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

Can you imagine that? First of all, we get the sense these were no ordinary dreams. He knew this. You also wonder, shouldn't Jacob of all people have known better? Joseph knew the dreams were special, and he wouldn't have continued to tell his brothers even when they jeered at him. But to tell forth these deep and moving experiences and have them thrown back at you, that's hard enough. Then try telling them to your father and having him rebuff you. Joseph knows he's different. But how does he cope with this difference when he struggles to be understood by even his father? But wait, there's more.

Now his brothers sell him into slavery. That's not bad enough, they generally mistreat him. He quickly transitions from being a sheltered and favored child to a life of slavery. It's so hard to even imagine what that must have been like. But I guess that for many of us, we would despair that we were destined to die a slave.



And yet, from his character and behavior throughout the story, we must surmise that Joseph merely took each day as it came, doing the best he could with his current situation, even excelling at the tasks laid before him. Why do we believe he excelled at the tasks given to him? Well, how else does he land in the house of Potiphar, chief of the Pharaoh's guards? Certainly, there was providence involved, but we believe that Joseph was recognized as being special. Isn't it interesting to consider that everyone recognized Joseph as special, except for his own family?!

It brings to mind **Mark 6:4**, where ***"Jesus said unto them, 'A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.'"***

But there's more. So now he conquers slavery, and risen to privileged position in Egypt. Now he's accused by the

wife of his master. So how does he react? She quite literally holds his life in her hands. Is there a temptation to just go along with her, even though you know it's wrong? He doesn't, and so he was sent to the prison. But even from prison, he seems to have maintained his faith and his positive outlook. In fact, it must have been noticeable again, even to the jailer, for we are told, 'he found favor in the sight of the jailer.' And Joseph was put in charge of all the prisoners in the jail, which in turn led him to the cupbearer and the baker and their dreams, which in turn led him to the service of Pharaoh.

And even this is not really the end of it, because he comes to the point where he's actually in charge of much of the economy of the entire nation of Egypt. How could that go wrong? Could he start to grow a large ego? Could he become drunk with the power?

When his family shows up, those that spitefully used him so many years ago, does he imprison them and punish them and take this opportunity to get that revenge that he's plotted in his heart all these years? But there was no revenge there. Instead, he just hopes they will make his most tenuous wish a reality, that he might be reunited with his father and his younger brother.

Throughout all this, Joseph was faced with daily choices. How does he choose to react? Through it all, we see him behaving with grace and dignity. We're not told that he moans or weeps or despairs. In fact, from the fact that he trusts his brothers, that he rises from general slavery to somehow being employed by the captain of the Pharaoh's

Guard, and then somehow being demoted into prison into a promotion to interpreter to Pharaoh, and eventually, his right-hand man, we can only conclude he is behaving admirably along every step of his personal journey. He doesn't gain any of these things by feeling sorry for himself or by second guessing what he must have done wrong, because he didn't do anything wrong to get into these positions.

Woe is Me?

So how can we endeavor to be more like Joseph? Do we sometimes fall into the trap of spending our time thinking, 'woe is me, why are my needs not being met? Why is God allowing this trial to befall me?' If we stop spending time overanalyzing and start just digging in and getting it done, whatever it is, won't we be more likely to achieve the ends that are before us? Even if we're not even sure what those ends are, because that's not our job.

And when we find ourselves locked into a task not of our choosing, enslaved, working for Potiphar, working in the jail, do we do it with our might?

Ecclesiastes 9:10 – “what your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

We sometimes do find ourselves mistreated. We sometimes find ourselves victims of circumstances beyond our control.

When things go very well, there's a temptation to get

swept up in the positives. In Joseph's case, his good position he had in Potiphar's household or even later, the power he held over almost anybody in Egypt. We need to be on guard against those sorts of temptations.

And on the other hand, when things don't go well, we can become blaming or act the helpless victim, abdicating our own choices and responsibilities in what you might describe as a childish attempt to strike back at our misfortune. 'Well, you did this to me, so I'm going to do this to you.' None of that does us any good. In fact, it only holds us back from achieving what we otherwise might have. Consider if Joseph had acted in this manner. Would he have continually found success?

And so, we see that success can be had in all circumstances. It's not always the success we initially envisioned for ourselves, but God's plan for us is not about our expectations.

If we are fully committed to doing God's will, we cannot fail because He will always do His part in bringing an eventual blessing to us. Our spiritual success is far more important to God than our earthly success. If God is involved in directly our lives, a greater and wiser success will be achieved.

Paul

Now let's turn to the Apostle Paul. Did he have struggles? Do you think he struggled with anything? One that occurred to me when I was working at compiling these thoughts is:

Imagine persecuting sinners with your whole heart and then finding out that you were completely wrong.

Acts 9: verses 1 and 2. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

Acts the 26th chapter verses 9 to 11. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

How does one get over that? Is it as simple as saying, "Oops, my mistake!" Can we imagine the shame and guilt that might follow the kind of realization of what you've been doing?

But that's not all. Now that you realize how wrong you were, you have to go to these people that probably hate and mistrust you, by the way, and you have to spend your life caring for them and teaching them and preaching and loving and advising them. And that's only the Christian converts.

Throughout all of this, Paul had to endure persecution from his former colleagues, as well as anybody that felt threatened by Christianity from the government to offended Jews. And in the midst of these trials and turmoil, do you think Paul ever grew weary and just wished to settle down somewhere quiet, get some rest? That's not how Paul chose to react. We are not told he moped or felt sorry for himself because he had persecuted the true Christ. Did he mope or feel sorry for himself for standing idly by and holding the coats of those that stoned Stephen? Did he mope or feel sorry for himself when he was imprisoned or when he was shipwrecked, or did he just roll up his sleeves and roll with the circumstances?

When faced with persecution and unjustified imprisonment, he did not give up. He didn't ease up on his duties. He didn't weep bitterly and curse God. We're told none of these things. To the best of our knowledge, he never reached a point where he stopped. He kept striving to serve God and glorify God, through his good behavior, for his entire life.



2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 7 to 12. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

This is really a great passage for us to remember. ***'We are afflicted, but we're not crushed. We are perplexed, but we're not despairing.'***

When we find we've done wrong or are currently doing wrong, do we spend valuable time and energy wallowing in guilt, or do we learn to forgive ourselves, as Paul did, and move forward in what we've now discovered is the right direction? Of course, that particular one I suspect is easier said than done, but it is a goal of mine nonetheless.

We read in ***1 John chapter 1, verse 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***

And when we are faced with persecutions or roadblocks of the world, do we slow down or give up? I don't mean to suggest quitting at the first sign things might not be going our way, but rather that the challenge may lie in

determining if a roadblock is of the Lord or of worldly distraction and interference. This is not always an easy distinction.

In these circumstances, it comes down to doing what we can. We pray about it, we fellowship and confer with our brethren in the hopes of gaining improved perspective and guidance from the Holy Spirit, and then we return to the same lesson we always do. We simply do the best with what we have, knowing what we know.

There's a lesson in business that's been out there for a number of years now. The admonition that sums it up is to have "strong opinions, but weakly held." And the reason it works is it's too easy in life to falter, to delay, to suffer analysis paralysis while waiting to find that perfect answer. [[And Jamie's probably laughing at me right now because me providing advice on analysis paralysis is an example of the pot calling the kettle black. But I'm aware of this fault in myself. I'm actively working to improve upon it.]]

And I do believe that this idea of "strong opinions weakly held," this approach, is the way in which to achieve this improvement. We never have all the information we need to make a decision that we might call perfect. But precisely because that's the case, nobody, including our Heavenly Father, expects us to be making perfect decisions day in and day out. Instead, we're asked to do the best we can with what we've been given.

Trust in the guidance of your conscience, and the Holy Spirit, and move forward. But this is where the "weakly held"

portion of this admonition becomes important. We must always be open to the idea that our strong opinions are imperfect. We must be actively seeking to improve that judgment and our understanding.



Although Paul is an extreme case of this, I think he demonstrates this concept well. He had exceeding strong opinions. Yes, they were misguided, but once realized his error, he altered direction and devoted himself to this new and improved understanding.

Now, maybe it's practical for us to expect to never feel guilt at an error, but I do think it's important we recognize that mistakes are guaranteed and how we react and adapt and grow from these mistakes is a lot more important to our development than the fact that a mistake was made.

Philippians chapter 3, verses 13 and 14. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We must press on toward the goal of always doing God's will.

Joshua

And now we come to our last example, Joshua. Have you ever considered the struggles of Joshua? We don't often think of this one.

But imagine for a moment you're a young man, some speculation puts Joshua in the ballpark of 35 years of age, and you, along with several others, spy out the land of Canaan, and you bring back a good report. 'We can take this land and its inhabitants because the Lord is with us.' Only that's not what everybody says, and the people are afraid, and they're unwilling to trust in God's power and protection, and in punishment the entire nation is relegated to wandering and the wilderness until 40 years have elapsed.

Imagine what that's like. You've been there. You were in the promised land. You've seen the riches and the promise of setting up a permanent home for your people there, but because of the lack of faith in others, you're not allowed to go there for 40 years. Instead, you have to roam in the wilderness, living off a daily provision of manna and quail. Would you maybe be just a little bit bitter?

Now, we're not really granted any particular insight in his reaction to these circumstances, but just like with Joseph, I think we can conclude from his relationship with God, his character and his behavior was likely to be exemplary.

It was no accident that he and Caleb were faithful above all others when it came to spying out the land. And his faithfulness and character were central to his role as leader

of the people, when they finally inhabited the land after their period of wandering. In fact, you could conclude that this period of his life, possibly the first 70 years or so, was all a period of grooming him to eventually take on the role of leader.

God's Timetable

The lessons we take from Joshua's life begin with patience. 40 years worth of patience is alone something to be amazed about!

Can we say we're always patient when our Lord's plans ask us to delay? Even a couple of years, much less 40?

When we see the way ahead so very clearly, do we chafe at an interruption? Or can we cheerfully conclude that it's just not the proper time? No matter the reason for delay, whether because of lessons we have to learn or simply because of the complexities and surprises of life, a cheerful and patient response is always the better course if we only remember to do this.

Do we ever find ourselves the victim of poor decisions or errors in judgment of our friends and family? That's what happened with Joshua. Having to go back into the wilderness Joshua must have possessed great patience. He made no complaints. He accepted the will of God without questioning. Like the other individuals we have examined, Joshua provides an example of patience endurance.

Do our circumstances sometimes hang on the actions of others? And if these things happen to not go well, how do

we react? The reaction we have to an experience is really a choice we make. When an experience is unpleasant, we may, by default, choose to be irritated and annoyed. Or we can choose to take the experience as an opportunity to express our trust and confidence in God.

Sometimes we are overanxious for something to happen. But part of faith is to wait for the Lord's timing and not demand instant results. There is often great wisdom in waiting, trying to have a cheerful heart in spite of delay. Committing ourselves to God's timetable is a great blessing.

I'm sure you'll recognize in ***James chapter 4 verses 13 to 15***. ***“Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”***

Frustration and anger often arise from upset expectations. I wouldn't say that we ought not have expectations, but if we could grow better about tempering them with the possibility of them altering, it would go a long way toward evening out our fleshly response.

When things don't go our way, we must resist the urge to point the finger or lay blame. We must resist the urge to grumble and lay all our hardships at the feet of others. This does nobody any good. Instead, we do what we can, where we are.

We must grow where we are planted and not demand that God move us to a more pleasing spot.

When we think we know what God wants of us, but we don't immediately see an easy path, just set one foot in front of the other. It certainly can be scary, but this is why we consider and pray, asking that we make decisions in accordance with his will. After that, there is nothing for it but to move forward in faith.

Too much second guessing will at best lead to delay, and at worst, lead to stagnation.

Final lessons

Brethren, our imperfect human characters are prone to so many challenges. Sometimes it can feel like we're trying to plug 50 holes in the dyke with only the 10 fingers we've been given. It's a hope that by highlighting a few of the more admirable stories of our heroes of faith doing things right, we might thereby encourage everyone here to renew our efforts to put down the flesh and march forward with conviction.

As we looked over the lives of Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Joseph, Paul, and Joshua, we've been reminded that putting our faith and commitment in our Father is essential.

We ought not be too proud to assist in any way we can, and sometimes doing the right thing might seem to require us to give up life as we know it. That doesn't necessarily mean our life will be over.

Matthew 10:39 – “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake will find it.”

There are no promises that our life will be carefree and painless. Having a rough start of it, for example, Esther with her parents, that doesn't mean we get a free pass for the rest of our life. We patiently keep working our way forward, doing the Lord's will in our lives as best we can. Sometimes we may find that a great trial is actually positioning us to be an even greater blessing.

No matter what trials and hardships we must endure, doing so with grace and dignity will show all around us that we are different. And that difference may still be respected even if nobody understands the source.

Do not grumble or complain because all are watching us as examples of the Lord's people. But instead, remember the lesson of Joseph, how through all his varying trials he was continually placed in positions the Lord's will might eventually be done. Never along the path was the final goal evident, but that is never part of the job description.

Make the best decisions you can, relying on the Lord and on prayerful consideration as much as possible. Don't beat yourself up about your mistakes but resolve to be aware of them and learn from them, and continue to push forward knowing that God will bless your sincere efforts. And above all, we must put our trust in the Lord. We can't ask for more than his guidance, and he does not ask for more than our best efforts.

These few examples show elements of the character that I wish to develop in myself, and I hope that perhaps they may inspire you as they inspire me.

We leave you with an admonition from the Apostle Paul:

Philippians 3:17 – “Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern that you have in us.”

May the Lord add his blessing!

1 Corinthians 7:24

“Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”



BIBLE STUDENTS
Food for New Creature

