

Patiently Waiting

God is in control and is providing everything we need, not everything we want. We may want luxury here, but He has provided the straight and narrow way to heaven. We may desire a mansion here, but He has provided an eternal dwelling place in heaven. We may want a vast fortune so we can buy anything, but He has provided a way to accumulate a treasure in heaven. We may want to be free of death, but God uses death to bring His righteous children into His paradise. We may want everything now, but He tells us, as He did Abraham, just wait.

Our Father in Heaven is a rational, spiritual being. He expects us to study and understand the hard things as well as the easy things. When a child is sick or hurt, the parent's assurance that everything will be better soon may be hard for them to understand, but faith in the parent encourages endurance to the treatment necessary to cure or mend the body. It will not happen instantaneously, but the promise helps quiet anxiety. God assures us that the trials and turmoil of this life will not last. His reasoning often uses examples from nature around us.

Seeds are an analogy of our life. Matthew 13 and Mark 4 contain the parable of the sower and the effect of soil on the seed. Both identify the "seed" as the Word of God. Of the four types of hearers, the only one that has an immediate effect is the one who rejects or does not understand the Word. Of the other three, the only one that grows to maturity is the one who accepts, understands, and waits for mature fruit. The other two are drawn off into the things of the world or depressed by the persecutions and troubles they suffer.

We know that after planting a seed, one must wait for it to sprout, give it good, productive, life-nourishing soil, and then we must wait for the plant to grow and blossom. At some point, a more potent fertilizer will be needed to help the flower turn into fruit. The fruit must receive the right food and water to allow it to ripen. The same sequence applies to Spiritual growth within each person who believes in the Word of God.

When the Word is first planted into an individual, it must be nourished. This requires gentle nourishment instead of a strong fertilizer so that it will not "burn" the developing plant. Scripture refers to this as *"the pure milk of the word"* (1 Peter 2:2), the fundamental points of the gospel that help an individual grow in faith. The Hebrew writer reminds us that an individual who thrives physically passes from milk to a more substantial diet as the body grows and matures. *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant"* (Hebrews 5:12-13).

This growth, which allows the Christian to develop deep roots of faith into the word of God, enables them to remain faithful in this world. Paul said he preached the gospel so that people would believe it and *"hold fast"* because of it (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Referring to the things that would draw them away from the faith, Paul said: *"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong"* (1 Corinthians 16:13). And to do just that, Christ has given us the Whole Armor of God. *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of*

wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:10-17).

May we always hold to our belief that our God watches over us. As the Psalmist said, *"I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD" (Psalms 27:13-14).*