

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. STEADFAST PATIENCE
 - A. Confidence in God
 - 1. The fiery furnace
 - 2. David & God's faithfulness
 - B. You Have Need of Patience
 - 1. Retaining your faith under trial
 - 2. Don't give up — HOLD ON!
- III. STANDING AGAINST ADVERSITY
 - A. The Source of Adversity
 - 1. The thief
 - 2. Satan's limited means of attack
 - B. Count It All Joy
 - 1. Coping vs. deliverance
 - 2. Perfect and complete
 - C. The Battleground of the Fight of Faith
 - 1. Fear
 - 2. Despondency
- IV. RECEIVING THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE
 - A. Make a Decision
 - B. Stand Against Your Adversary
 - C. Give Attention To God's Word
 - D. Speak Only Words of Faith
- V. SUMMARY — PATIENCE, CONFIDENCE, FAITH,
THE PROMISES & GOD'S FAITHFULNESS
- VI. ASSIGNMENTS

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

I. INTRODUCTION

In Mark 11:24 Jesus established a principle of faith which gives us insight into how to receive the blessings that God desires us to have. *"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be yours."* The principle is this: We are to believe that we have received (*past tense*) **before** we have any physical evidence, and **then** they shall be ours (*future tense*).

There is often, however, a period of time between when we believe that we have received and when we see a manifestation in the physical realm. It is during this time that Christians are sorely tempted to waver and give up. That is when we need to stand steadfastly in faith, unwavering in our conviction that God has already answered our prayers. That is when we need to exercise patience, so that we may receive. The Bible says that we are to imitate those who through *faith and patience* inherit the promises of God (Hebrews 6:12). It is when patience is added to faith that a believer will be able to remain steadfast until he receives the manifestation of what he is believing for. Patience will enable him to keep his faith applied until he inherits God's promise.

There comes a time in every believer's life when he must stand firmly in faith and on the Word in the face of adversity and trial. Faith in God's Word is enough to carry a believer through any difficulty which the enemy can stir up. And faith *will* bring a person through a trial victoriously, if he remains patient and does not give up. When a believer perseveres in trial, remaining steadfast and patient in faith, he will *always* come out the victor in every situation.

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

Mark 11:24

That you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews 6:12

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

II. STEADFAST PATIENCE

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews 6:11,12

And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

Hebrews 6:15

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

Hebrews 10:35

Faith is the spiritual quality which enables us to receive from God. But often, believers are tempted to give up their stand of faith when things don't appear to be going according to what they have believed. This is when patience (steadfastness or perseverance) is essential. Without patience no one would keep their faith engaged long enough to see the fulfillment of God's promise. *"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (Hebrews 6:11,12). If Abraham had not been patient as well as faithful, he would never have received the promise of God. But Abraham was a patient man. *"And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise"* (Hebrews 6:15).

Patience is what keeps faith engaged until the fulfillment of the promise, or until the answer to the prayer is manifested in the physical realm. W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines patience as follows: "Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope."¹ Patience enables a believer to stand until he experiences results. When patience is added to faith, faith will stay engaged, and he will receive his inheritance from God. But, faith will not remain firm unless patience is put into effect in a believer's life.

A. CONFIDENCE IN GOD

"Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward" (Hebrews 10:35 Amplified). The fearless confidence to which the writer of Hebrews refers is our faith in God and His Word. It is our inner assurance that God's Word is true, and that He will not fail us. God's Word will not fail, if a believer will retain his confidence in it. These Hebrews were being tempted to fling away their confidence and trust in God.

If it is not cast away, fearless confidence (faith) has great reward attached to it. Standing in faith will bring to the

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

believer all the things which God purchased for them through the redemptive work of His Son. Faith has a *“great and glorious compensation of reward,”* because God is a **rewarder** of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

1. The fiery furnace

Read Daniel 3.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three men who retained their confidence in God and His ability to deliver them. In the face of imminent fiery destruction, they boldly said to Nebuchadnezzar, *“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king”* (Daniel 3:17). They didn’t let the circumstances shake their confidence and faith in their God. They fully expected to come out of the furnace unscathed, before they even went in.

Their fearless confidence had a great compensation of reward. They were delivered from the evil intention of the king and unharmed by his attempt to destroy them, because they trusted in God to deliver them (Daniel 3:28). The end result of the trial was that the three Hebrews were promoted to positions of honor within Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom (Daniel 3:29,30). They received the compensation that comes when a person puts his full trust and confidence in the Lord.

2. David & God’s faithfulness

David’s confidence was in God because he was convinced of God’s mercy and faithfulness. *“Thy lovingkindness O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies”* (Psalm 36:5). *“Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations . . .”* (Psalm 119:89,90). David was assured of the fact that, no matter what the circumstances, his God was faithful to deliver him. That is why he constantly affirmed God’s goodness in his own thinking. *“Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you”* (Psalm 116:7).

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.”

Daniel 3:17

Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

Daniel 3:28

“Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.” Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:29,30

Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies.

Psalm 36:5

Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations; Thou didst establish the earth, and it stands.

Psalm 119:89,90

Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

Psalm 116:7

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Hebrews 10:36

Our confidence in God is based upon a revelation of His goodness and faithfulness. In order to stand steadfast in faith, you must understand that God is unfailing and will not let you down if you're trusting in His faithfulness. The three Hebrews in Daniel knew that God would deliver them out of the hand of the wicked king; their confidence was in God and His faithfulness.

B. YOU HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE

"For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away (and enjoy to the full) what is promised" (Hebrews 10:36 Amplified). Patience and endurance are the qualities which will keep a person from flinging away his confidence or faith in God and His goodness. Only patience will enable a person to keep his faith engaged, so that he can receive and carry away what God has promised in His Word.

A good example of the relationship between faith and patience is seen in the way in which a person brakes his car. Faith is like the brake that brings about the desired result (i.e. the stopping of the vehicle). Patience is like the foot that keeps the brake applied until the vehicle is brought to a complete halt. In the same way, faith brings about the desired result, but patience keeps faith applied, in the face of adverse circumstances, until the result is manifested. If a person flings away his confidence, it is like putting his foot to the brake of a car, but removing it before the car is brought to a stop.

1. Retaining your faith under trial

Patience does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. It is in the midst of trial and adverse circumstances that a believer will be tempted to give up. No one is going to be tempted to fling away his confidence when everything is going right. But when circumstances arise which are contrary to God's Word and will, then the enemy comes to try to get believers to throw away their faith in God's faithfulness.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

Without patience a believer will not have the endurance to retain his faith when things are not going right. He will succumb under trial and surrender to circumstances (usually by saying that those circumstances are the will of God), and so will not receive the reward that God wants him to have. *"But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him"* (Hebrews 10:38). God has no pleasure in those who draw back (i.e. who throw away their confidence), because this stops the blessing of God from being manifested in their lives. God delights in the prosperity of His people (Psalm 35:27), and it is His good pleasure to give unto us the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

2. Don't give up — HOLD ON!

Every believer has need of patience, for without it, one would quickly give up under trial. Abraham stood firm in his conviction that God would honor His Word, and patiently waited in the face of insurmountable difficulty. It was his patience that caused him to remain steadfast on God's promise, even though what God had promised was not immediately manifested.

Even so, we must exercise our patience so that we can receive from God. Just because the promises of God are not immediately manifested in our experience is no reason for us to give up. When patience keeps faith applied, then the result will be forthcoming. But if we allow ourselves to become discouraged, then we will not leave our faith engaged long enough to see the manifestation of the things which God has promised. So the exhortation to the Hebrews is given also to us. **Don't throw away your confidence in God and His Word!** Faith and confidence have great reward, if they are retained steadfastly and not flung away because of discouragement.

"But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

Hebrews 10:38

Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; and let them say continually, "The Lord be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant."

Psalm 35:27

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

Luke 12:32

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

III. STANDING AGAINST ADVERSITY

Blessed is the man whom Thou dost chasten, O Lord, and dost teach out of Thy law; that Thou mayest grant him relief from the days of adversity, until a pit is dug for the wicked.

Psalm 94:12,13

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

James 1:13

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

I Peter 5:8

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 8:31,32

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.

Ephesians 6:12

Patience is the power to hold oneself calm in the day of trial or adversity, and not be shaken off the Word. The day of adversity is that time in a believer's life when circumstances seem to contradict the Word of God. (It is sometimes called trial, testing, tribulation or the evil day.) In these times, the temptation comes for believers to cast away their faith in God's ability and faithfulness. But if one is trained out of the Word to be patient and not to give in, then he will not be shaken by the winds of adversity. "*Blessed is the man whom You discipline and instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law; that you may give him power to hold himself calm in the days of adversity, until the [inevitable] pit of corruption is dug for the wicked*" (Psalm 94:12,13 Amplified).

Patience has the courage to refuse what Satan's circumstances can prove true in the natural world. Patience says, "*Let God be true but every man a liar!*" (Romans 3:4 KJV). It won't fail under pressure, because it knows that God's Word has never failed. Patience knows that when faith is exercised on God's Word, **success is inevitable**. It is not moved by adverse circumstance or trial, but remains steadfast, trusting in God's Word and His goodness.

A. THE SOURCE OF ADVERSITY

When faced with tribulation and trial, it is imperative for Christians to understand that God is not the source of these things in their lives. God does not tempt (try or test) His people with adversity or calamity. "*Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone*" (James 1:13). Our real adversary, the one behind trial and adversity, is the devil and his demonic hosts. Satan is called our adversary (I Peter 5:8), because he is the one who is pitted against us. God is not against us; God is for us! (Romans 8:31,32).

"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" (Ephesians 6:12). This verse shows us clearly that our adversaries are evil, demonic powers, that

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

seek to steal the Word from within us and make us cast away our confidence in God. Paul goes on to say that we are to stand against the wiles of the enemy which he brings against us in the "evil day" (Ephesians 6:13), that time in our lives when the enemy comes against us with lying circumstances.

1. The thief

Jesus said that when the Word of God is planted within a person's heart, Satan comes *immediately* to steal what has been planted within them (Mark 4:15). The persecution and adversity arise in order to try to get the Word out of a believer (Mark 4:17). Satan will try to use trial and test to get us to fling away our confidence. Those trials will always come in the form of physical evidence which seems to contradict God's Word, and cast doubt on God's intentions toward us. Tribulation and adversity are nothing more than the enemy trying our faith. They are an attempt to get the Word (the basis of faith) out of our hearts. When a believer retains his confidence in God and His Word, there is no way that he can fail to receive from God. Because of this, the enemy tries everything within his limited power to get us to throw in the towel, by convincing us that the Word is not working, and that God will let us down.

2. Satan's limited means of attack

The only weapons which the enemy can level against us are *natural* weapons. Satan does not have the authority or ability to supernaturally overwhelm Christians. "*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it*" (I Corinthians 10:13).

The enemy's tests are not overwhelmingly powerful; they are "*common to man.*" This means that Satan's power against us is limited to natural means. He works his weapons against us in the physical and mental realms. This is why he must use *deception* to accomplish his devices in the earth. If he were able to supernaturally overcome Christians at will, he would have done so long ago.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:13

"And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them."

Mark 4:15

"And they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."

Mark 4:17

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

I Corinthians 10:13

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.

Romans 5:3

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.

James 1:2

Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:3

And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:4

Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.

Romans 12:12

But, Satan is not able to simply annihilate believers whenever he pleases. He must therefore deceive them into thinking that he can destroy them, and thus get them to throw away their faith and confidence. The enemy cannot rob a believer of his faith and confidence in God. The believer has to throw it away himself! Thus, Satan tries every day to deceive believers into thinking that he has the power to overwhelm them. Christians who believe this lie of the devil will always fling away their confidence.

B. COUNT IT ALL JOY

The scriptures exhort believers to count it as joy when they are tempted, tested or tried (Romans 5:3; James 1:2). We are not to rejoice *because* of adversity. We are to rejoice in the midst of trial because we know something about that trial. The Bible says that **adversity exercises and develops patience in the believer**. "*Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance (patience)*" (James 1:3 NIV). The joy comes from our knowing that any trial which we encounter can only make us stronger and more mature, *if* we will allow patience to work as it should.

"*Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*" (James 1:4 NIV). The problem with many Christians is that they don't allow patience a chance to work, and so give up in the midst of the trial or adversity. But, the scriptures call upon us to be patient and to persevere in the midst of trial or tribulation (Romans 12:12). As we stand steadfast in the midst of trial, then patience is developed within us.

1. Coping vs. deliverance

The end result and aim of patience is that the promises of God be manifested in our lives. Some mistakenly believe that patience means the ability to bear with a situation *which has no solution*. Since there is no way out of the trial and adversity, patience is seen as the ability to *cope* with it. Thus, if one were sick, patience would enable a person to cope with the disease.

But, Bible patience is given so that we can keep our faith engaged **until the unchangeable situation changes by the power of God**. Patience is meant to take us *through* adver-

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

sity, not just to help us to cope. *"The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation"* (II Peter 2:9). God's purpose and desire is that we experience deliverance from adversity in this life. Many relegate deliverance from temptations to the return of Jesus. But the Bible states that God will deliver us out of all our trials — in this life. Paul, in speaking of the many trials and adversities which he had faced during his ministry said, *"Out of them ALL the Lord delivered me!"* (II Timothy 3:11). *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them ALL!"* (Psalm 34:19).

2. Perfect and complete

Jesus taught His disciples that they could rejoice while in the midst of tribulation. *"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 KJV). It is a fact that as long as we are here on this earth, we will have trials and adversity. Jesus Himself said so. But He also told us to be of good cheer, because He had already overcome the world.

We can rejoice and count it all joy when we encounter tribulation, because we know that when patience is put to work, it will make us complete in Christ, and God will always make a way of escape for us. **He has overcome the world!** Thus, we can face each trial with the full realization that not only will God deliver us from it, but also that the trial will develop patience within us. And when patience is allowed to have its full effect in our lives, then we will be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything (James 1:4).

Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.

II Peter 2:9

Persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!

II Timothy 3:11

Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Psalm 34:19

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:4

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

C. THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE FIGHT OF FAITH

When faced with trial or tribulation, Christians often fail to recognize where the battle must be fought. The fight of faith is not an external, physical battle against adverse circumstances. The fight of faith is within the soul of each individual believer. The struggle is one of keeping our thinking and meditation stayed on God and His Word, rather than on the situation.

As we said earlier, the enemy's external attacks are attempts to get the Word out of us, so that we will give up and shrink back from our confidence. His real aim is to get the storm that is raging outside, *within* us, so that we will become fearful and despondent. This is exactly what happened to the disciples as they encountered a storm on the Sea of Galilee. They were overcome not by the storm so much as by their *fear* of the storm. They allowed the storm to get inside them. But Jesus was asleep in the rear of the ship; the storm did not get inside Him. He awoke and simply rebuked the wind and the waves (Mark 4:35-41).

What happened to the disciples in this situation often happens to believers today. *They allow the storm of adversity to become lodged within them in the form of fear and despondency.* They struggle against the outward manifestation of the enemy's attack, as the disciples surely must have tried to counter the effects of the storm by rowing and bailing. But, all the time they do not realize that they are losing the battle *within*. Jesus could speak to the wind and waves effectively because **He had not allowed the storm to lodge within Him; He was not afraid!** But the disciples were first fearful, and then they became despondent; they thought that they were going to die (Mark 4:38).

The two major inward attacks that Satan and his demons will wield against believers are fear and despondency. If he can win this inward battle by planting these two things within a believer, then he can get the believer to cast away his confidence. But if the believer will recognize the real source of the problem, and where the battleground really lies, fear and despondency will not be able to lodge themselves in his heart and mind. Circumstances will come into line if a believer will retain his confidence, not casting it away because of fear or despondency.

And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Mark 4:35-41

And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

Mark 4:38

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

1. Fear

Fear is the opposite of faith; it operates in much the same manner as does faith, but brings about opposite results. Faith is our confidence in the truthfulness of God's Word. Fear is our belief in the lies of the devil. Faith is the assurance or substance of things hoped for or desired. Fear is the substance of things which are *not* desired.

The arena of faith is the mind, and the fight of faith is one of keeping the mind stayed on God and His Word. The enemy will attempt to destroy our confidence by planting thoughts of failure and disaster in our minds. He wants to get the storm within us through fear, as he did with the disciples. But, the Bible says that we are to keep our minds fixed on things that are true and of good report (Philippians 4:8). Certainly, the lies of the enemy do not qualify as "good" or of "good report."

So when facing trial or adversity, the battle is fought within one's own mind. When the storm has been kept out of a person's mind, then he can squarely face physical obstacles and through the power of God overcome them.

2. Despondency

In W. E. Vine's definition of patience, despondency was listed as the opposite of patience. Just as fear is the opposite of faith, so despondency is the opposite of patience. **Despondency always grows out of a person's fear that the Word of God will fail them.** It is the state of mind which will always give up and cast away confidence in God's Word. If the devil can convince a person — through fear — that they are bound to fail, and that God's Word will not work in a particular situation, then all that that person is left with is hopelessness and despair.

Despondency is the enemy of patience. It will do the exact opposite of what patience will do. Patience will enable a person to stand firm in faith, in the face of testing and trial. Despondency will cause a person to waver and vacillate on their faith, and eventually cause that person to cast away their faith. As with fear, the battle with despondency is in one's mind. It is when people become convinced in their own minds that there is no hope that they give up.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

Philippians 4:8

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

Satan knows that he cannot simply overwhelm believers. If he is going to defeat them in any area, he must, through deception, get them to give up the fight and succumb to the trial. Thus, he comes against believers with fear and despondency, in order to get Christians to cast away their confidence in God. He can only win when he convinces someone of the lie that there is no hope and no answer. But, if a believer will not allow fear or despondency to remain within, but will patiently stand in faith, the enemy does not have the power to stop the manifestation of the answer or deliverance from the trial.

The fight of faith is an inward struggle, not an outward physical struggle. The enemy's aim is to get you to fling away your fearless confidence. When faced with trial or test *remember that the real target is not your body or your possessions. The real target is your faith and confidence in God and His Word.* That is the precious commodity which the devil wants to rob from you. Before attempting to address the physical situation, make sure that the storm has not become lodged within. If it has, deal with that inner storm of fear and discouragement *first* by reaffirming in your own thinking the goodness and faithfulness of God. Meditate on the faithfulness of your Father until the storm is no longer within you, and that fear and despondency are cast out. Then address the situation by speaking a positive confession out of your mouth, just like Jesus did on the Sea of Galilee.

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

IV. RECEIVING THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE

The Bible says that Abraham received the promised son through faith and patience. Faith brought the impossible to pass, but patience kept faith engaged until the promised son was manifested in the physical realm. It is when we stand steadfastly on the Word of God that we receive from God what He has promised us. *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him”* (James 1:12). The one who perseveres under trial, and doesn't cast away his confidence is the one who receives.

The following are four steps to follow in standing steadfastly in faith for the things that we desire. These are not given as some kind of formula. They are simply given to help us understand how to remain steadfast and unmovable in our faith, so that the devil cannot deceive or defeat us.

A. MAKE A DECISION

Make a decision to believe you receive when you pray and decide not to change (Mark 11:24). Don't look to the physical realm for your evidence of answered prayer. The answer is yours in the spiritual realm as soon as you believe that you have received. Your evidence of the answer is God's Word alone. Make a decision not to change your confession, until you see your answer come to pass in the physical realm. Patience will enable you to stand on God's Word, unwavering, and will keep your faith engaged, until the manifestation comes.

Make a decision to *win!* A decision is an exercise of your will. The dictionary defines “will” as “strong purpose, intention or determination.” If you make a determination to have what God's Word says, you will have it. Will is the determination to receive something. Make a decision to stand with the determination that you are going to come through every trial victoriously!

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:12

“Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you.

Mark 11:24

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

Philippians 4:8

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body.

Proverbs 4:20-22

B. STAND AGAINST YOUR ADVERSARY

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Too often, Christians will resist the Word of God with their mouth (through negative confessions), and submit themselves to the devil, by confessing and meditating on his lies. But, we must submit ourselves to God by meditating on what He has said, and resist the lies and evil thoughts of Satan.

Learn to stop worrying. Worry is meditation on Satan's words. Meditate on God's Word instead. When a thought comes to you, discern its origin. Not every thought originates in you. If a thought is contrary to the truth of God's Word, it is a lie from the enemy. Resist the devil by rejecting his lies — one at a time in the Name of Jesus. The Bible tells us to control what we think about (Philippians 4:8). In this way, we resist the onslaughts of the adversary.

C. GIVE ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those that find them. And health to all their whole body” (Proverbs 4:20-22). Keep the Word in your heart. Pay attention to it. If your attention is on what God says and not on what the devil is saying, he doesn't have any way of defeating you. We are instructed to do these three things:

- Keep the Word in our ears.
- Keep the Word in front of our eyes.
- Keep the Word in the midst of our hearts.

If you are going to win, you will have to give attention to God's Word!

Just as no human being can look in two different directions at the same time, so also we cannot look attentively at God's Word and the devil's lies simultaneously. You are either looking at and giving attention to the Word of God, or you are giving attention to circumstances and the lies of the enemy. If you give attention to what the devil says, fear will arise in

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson TEN FAITH & PATIENCE — THE DESIGN OF GOD

your heart. But if you give your attention to the Word of God, faith will arise in your heart. If you will keep your attention focused on God's Word — all the time — then you put yourself into a position where you see every circumstance and situation through the eye of faith. The eye of faith sees the thing as already accomplished, provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

D. SPEAK ONLY WORDS OF FAITH

Refuse to speak words contrary to what you believe that you have received. Speak only words of success and abundance. Very often believers are defeated because of the words which come out of their mouths. They speak only what they can see in the physical, and this affirms what the enemy is trying to prove to them — that the Word isn't going to work this time. Our words must always be those which affirm that we have the answer. These words will arise out of a heart that is assured of God's faithfulness to His Word.

Just as faith always finds expression out of a person's mouth, so fear and doubt always find expression out of the mouth. Thus, we must take heed to what comes forth from our mouths, and be certain that what we speak is in line with the Word of God and with the answer that we desire.

V. SUMMARY — PATIENCE, CONFIDENCE, FAITH, THE PROMISES & GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

There is never any reason for a believer to cast away his confidence in God and His Word. God is faithful and true to the promises which He has given us in the scriptures. "*Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies*" (Psalm 36:5). God's mercy and His faithfulness are infinite. Because of this fact, His Word can be fully trusted and is worthy of complete confidence. But believers must learn to exercise patience, so that their faith in God will stay applied, and so that they don't cast away their confidence (Hebrews 10:36). Without patience, confidence will eventually be cast away, and the promises of God will not be received.

Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies.

Psalm 36:5

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Hebrews 10:36