

FAITH'S PERSISTENCY

Two of the major elements in the spiritual life and experience of God's people are the seemingly slow and hidden ways of God and the demand for persistent faith in His servants. This is a common experience, even among the greatest and most devoted of God's servants. It is not an experience confined to novices; in fact, perhaps they know little of it. Throughout the centuries, even the most outstanding of God's servants have been confronted by the problem of the slow response of the Lord. It sometimes looks to His people as though He were unhurried to the point of being tardy, and that just when their needs were most acute.

This leads then to the second point, the demand for persistent faith. Persistency is one of the principal features of the service of God. This provides a very serious warning against anything in the nature of complacency. Even after we have poured ourselves out and been assured that we have succeeded, we must beware of letting go too soon. The principle or spirit of service demands a real persistence of faith.

You will not find any servant of God of account or true value in the Bible who had not developed such persistence of faith. The moment of great peril to our faith is to have battled so far or expected so much in a situation only to be disappointed to find a complete lack of any evidence of God's working in that situation.

What can you do? Well, one of two things. The first is to conclude that, after all, the whole thing has been an illusion and to give way to the paralysis of despair because of the seeming unresponsiveness of God. The alternative is to keep going.

Faith is the title deed, the evidence of things not yet seen. It is so easy to make a big start, with a good deal of noise and activity and high expectations of something big that we think God is going to do, and then to lose heart because of disappointments and delays in its accomplishment. Our prayers are apt to wane and our energy and enthusiasm to decline just because God seems to be unresponsive.

What is He doing? He is making a servant: to Him, this is more important than the actual service. Such a servant has to learn that the Lord is more concerned about His own name than we are and knows best how to vindicate it. "The Lord, He is God!" The Lord has to make that clear. His delays, His hiding, His seeming indifference are all the testing means by which He develops true faith in His servants and works something of His own Spirit into their very constitution. It is on the last battle within that the whole issue depends. Full victory comes as a result of faith's persistency. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall rise up as eagles."

Excerpted and edited by Patrick J. Hession from a message by T. Austin-Sparks