

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT 4

Patience: We Can't Live Without It!

*"When I left my home in England...it was in the depth of winter; many trees were leafless and frost was on the ground...outside were grand, sturdy old trees as full of life as ever, their roots down in the warm soil; and clumps of hardy perennials were already pushing their heads through the ground to see if spring were on the way. Patience has the characteristics of those grand old trees just because it is the product of God's winters as well as His summers. It has the strength of all things that attain maturity only through trial... We must remember that this fruit of the Spirit is the direct result of our being made to participate in "the divine nature" through God's precious promises. And the fruit only grows into maturity as we live in communion with God."*¹

If it were not for the attribute of patience, our world would no longer exist today. Our God is currently operating in patience as he carries His return so that as many can come to him as possible. 2 Peter 3:9-10 states, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come..." Patience is a fruit none of us can afford to live without. It carries us through trials, keeps us in the will of God, and tenderizes our hearts in relationship with God and others.

Think of all the great saints who have gone before us who have weathered the storms of life with significant patience and long-suffering. For instance, Job and Joseph, these two men suffered a large amount, losing almost everything, yet they were patient and did not curse God or turn bitter. They waited on Him for their redemption, and as always, He delivered them both in the fullness of His time. In contrast, we see the results in the Old and New Testaments of those who did not operate in this fruit. King Saul in 1 Samuel 13 did not wait for Samuel before he built an altar and sacrificed the burnt offering. This disobedience cost him his crown. In the New Testament parable of the Prodigal Son, the son could not wait for the father to give him his inheritance, he demanded it immediately. The result of this brash impatience was the loss of all he was given and his eventual feeding from the troughs of pigs.

The Greek word used for patience in our Galatians 5 passage is makrothumia. It can be translated as forbearance, longsuffering, or self-restraint before proceeding to action, the quality of a person who is able to revenge himself yet refrains from doing so. "Makrothumia is patience in respect to persons while hupomone, endurance, is putting up with things or circumstances...Hupomone is inspired by hope and makrothumia, or the fruit of the Spirit called 'patience,' is inspired by mercy." What another fascinating aspect of patience! "Patience is inspired by mercy, devoid of condemnation, and evidence of the presence and power of God."² It is impossible to show mercy in our own strength. One can be sure the fruit of patience is growing in the soul as the extension of mercy

Pre-Article Questions:

1. How would you define patience?
2. Would you describe yourself as a patient person, why or why not?
3. Can you describe a time in your life where you had to exercise patience and it was really difficult?

1. Gee, Donald. 30,31.

2. Moore, Beth. 114

towards others is present. God has mercy on us and it is an expectation we treat others in a similar fashion, demonstrating his power and bringing Him glory.

Moreover, the best things in life are worth the wait and the toil it takes to seize them. In Palestinian farming, they plant in fall and harvest in spring, yet they must be patient for three things: early rains for germination, late rains so the plants will mature, and the actual harvest of the crop.³ American farmers must practice patience when it comes to harvesting crops as well. This waiting is not a passive resignation, rather an expectant waiting. Likewise, as believers, we must learn to walk in the fruit of patience knowing that the best growth is not instant, it takes time. God will have his way with us as long as we entrust ourselves to His tender care and perfect timing.

One of the greatest ways to entrust ourselves to the Lord and see patience played out in our lives is through prayer. Those who are patient will wait for the Lord in the area of prayer to work according to His timing, not theirs. We should continue to seek Him in prayer and petition until He has spoken or made a move. E.M Bounds, a world-renowned Methodist minister and devotional writer, quotes, "I think Christians fail so often to get answers to their prayers because they do not wait long enough on God. They just drop down and say a few words, and then jump up and forget it and expect God to answer them. Such praying always reminds me of the small boy ringing his neighbor's door-bell, and then running away as fast as he can go...It is hard to wait and press and pray, and hear no voice, but stay till God answers."⁴

Lastly, let us not forget God's patience is patience with a purpose: to bring men to repentance. We must remember that our patience also has a purpose. James reminds us that even in the difficult seasons and in the waiting we are to "consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."⁵ The Lord desires to produce the fruit of patience and accompanying perseverance in us so that we can be mature and complete, not lacking anything! What an amazing purpose God has in mind as the end of our patience!

John 11:1-16, 38-44

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the

3. Holwick, David. *Waiting for God*. August 14, 1994.

4. Christian.com. E.M. Bounds on Patience. 1999-2010

5. James 1:2-4

disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."...38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Mark 14:53-65

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. 55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56 Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. 57 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'" 59 Yet even then their testimony did not agree. 60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

Study Questions:

1. Re-read John 11:4, what strikes you about Jesus' reaction to the news of Lazarus?
2. Jesus did not go right away to Lazarus, how hard do you think that was for Him? How did he display patience in waiting to go and how did this impact His life and those around who saw the miracle? How might things have been different if he went right away to Lazarus?
3. Re-read the definition of patience from the article. In what other ways do we see Jesus walking in the fruit of patience in this passage as he interacts with the disciples, sisters, and prays to God?
4. How does Christ display patience as He stands before the Sanhedrin in Mark 14?
5. Share a time in your life when Christ was patient with you. How did this impact your relationship with Him?
6. Has there been a time in your life that you were not patient and did not wait or seek counsel from God about a decision? What were the affects? How did you learn and grow from this?
7. Is there someone in your life or a situation in your life that you need to walk in more patience in? How can prayer and community help you with this?
8. In First Corinthians 13 it says love is patient. How does our patience directly affect the world around us and our witness to the world of who Christ is? How is the growth of patience in our lives connected to loving God?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

This week you will be meeting with a brother or sister from your small group to memorize scripture, read a passage in scripture, answer a question, and pray for one another. Please use this time to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as brothers or sisters in Christ.

1. Memorize 2 Peter 3:9-10
2. Read the parable of the unmerciful servant together in Matthew 18, and discuss how this parable relates to the Greek definition of patience.
3. Discuss whether there is someone or something in your lives God is asking you to extend more patience towards? In doing this, how would this impact your relationship with Christ and the person?