

4. The Fruit of Patience

Colossians 3:12-14; Galatians 5:22-23

Intro

Patience, just the word is enough to remind most of us that we have a hard time with it. I don't care who you are, I know that you sometimes struggle with being patient. It doesn't matter whether you are a kid, an adult or a senior, there are times when other people or situations get to you and you lose your patience.

I chuckled when I read the story of a man whose car stalled in heavy traffic just as the light turned green. He was trying frantically to start the car but had no success. Meanwhile many other cars behind him were honking their horns. In spite of his best efforts the car wouldn't start through the entire time the light was green. The people behind him never stopped honking. He finally got out of his car and walked back to the driver right behind him who had been laying on the horn even though he could hear the man trying to start the engine. He politely said to the man, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. Would you mind trying to start my car and I'll honk the horn for you this time." Sometimes patience is hard to come by!

The Fruit of the Spirit

The well-known Bible scholar Dr. John Stott observed that the 9 fruits of the Spirit can be divided into 3 groups or attitudes. He suggests that:

- The first three: love, joy and peace, speak of our attitude to God.
- The second set of three relate primarily to our attitudes toward others: patience, kindness, goodness.
- The final three fruits of the Spirit he suggests reflect attitudes toward self: faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control.

What Is Patience?

There are actually three Greek New Testament words that can be translated as patience.

1) Anecho: (It comes from 2 Greek words, "up" & "hold").

Ephesians 4:1-2, "*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; **be patient**, bearing with one another in love.*"

The phrase "*be patient*" means to sustain, or patiently bear with something or someone.

2) Hupomone: (Comes from 2 Greek words, "under" & "abide.")

James 1:3-4, "...*knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (NKJV).

The word, "*patience*" in the New King James Version has been translated "*perseverance*" in various modern translations. The idea is that it's the patience that bears up under a load and provides steadiness in the midst of life's battles. It's the patience that allows a person to endure life's challenges without giving up and going home in defeat.

Although there's a little difference in these two kinds of patience, both deal with hanging on during difficult times.

3) Makrothumi (Comes from 2 Greek words, "makro" slow, and "thumos" anger) This is the one used in the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. It means, slow to anger. In other words it's the opposite of a short fuse.

It's the idea of not getting mad over the little irritations that are so much a part of everyone's life. It's hanging onto our emotions when we feel like letting anger fly over all those silly little things that so often get on our nerves. Let's be honest, sometimes that can be a real challenge. Let me illustrate.

Illustration

A man noticed a lady in the grocery store with her year-old in her cart. The child asked for cookies. Her mother said no. The little girl began to cry loudly. The mother patiently said, "Now Missy, we're half way done, it won't be long." The same thing happened in the candy aisle. This time the little girl kicked and screamed. The mother said, "There, there, Missy, only two more aisles and then we'll be done." At the checkout counter, the child reached for the gum. When her mom said no, the girl began to scream louder than ever. The mother said patiently, "Missy, we'll be through this checkout in five minutes and then we can go home and both have a nice nap." The man followed them out to the parking lot and complimented the woman. "I couldn't help noticing how patient you were with little Missy." The mother replied, "Thank you, but, my little girl is Francine... Uh, I'm Missy."

Patience of Our Lord

"Patience" means "being slow to anger."

The Bible reveals it as a characteristic of God. In Psalm 86:15 we read, "*But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness.*"

The supreme example of patience is Christ. Consider how patient He was with all the things He endured during His ministry. In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul spoke of Christ's example of patience: "*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited **patience** as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*"

Also in Romans 9:22 "*What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with **great patience** the objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction...*" What this is saying is that Christ endured with much patience a world of sinners. He has endured their unbelief, rejection, hatred, blasphemy, and iniquity, while patiently allowing time for repentance.

Believers are commanded to emulate the Lord's patience. We are taught in Colossians 3:12, "*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**.*" We are to be patient with one another.

Where Does Patience Come From?

The Bible is very clear when it comes to the "fruit of the Spirit," that these traits come from the Holy Spirit, not from our own power. Now, this doesn't mean of course that a person who is not a Christian cannot have any of these traits in their life. It does mean that with God's help, these characteristics should be a part of every Christian's life and practice.

How Does Patience Work?

I think patience is even more of a challenge in our culture than it is in most others because of the way we approach time. Let me explain what I mean. We live by the clock. We don't even know how often we look at a watch or clock, it's the way we measure nearly everything we do in a typical day. You might be surprised to know that our concept of time would have been completely foreign to people in the Middle Ages. People in those days didn't think in terms of hours, minutes and seconds. In fact, the concept of the second didn't even appear until the early 1700s.

Someone once said, "It wouldn't be hard to be patient if it weren't for other people."

Patience means giving others the time and space that we would like to have ourselves. It means self-control when we feel more like blowing up. It means allowing God to help us be patient with others, just as we want Him to be patient with us.

To summarize, patience literally means "anger that is put far away." If the Spirit controls us, fits of rage can be put far away. Patient people are hard to provoke. Their temper can absorb a lot before they "lose it."

As we've been learning, the fruit of the Spirit is both a gift and a task. These Christ-like character qualities come to us as a result of grace and they also get built into our lives as a result of some choices that we make. Especially the choice of allowing the Spirit to control us.

Practicing Patience

Here are some Scriptural steps that you can use to clothe yourself with patience.

1. Look at annoying people through the eyes of Christ. Philippians 2:3: "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*" When you're following a slow driver, instead of trying to punish him by tailgating, try to deliberately imagine the person as someone's grandfather. If you can do this, then you'll quickly realize that you don't blow up at a grandpa, you love him.
2. Release your anger appropriately. Ephesians 4:26 says, "*In your anger do not sin.*" That means that there are right ways and wrong ways to process anger. It's possible to be angry and not sin.
3. Focus on the Lord. Get to know Him better because the fruit of patience is rooted in the Lord Himself. The bottom line in bearing fruit is to abide in Christ and submit to the Holy Spirit by yielding control of our lives to Him. Galatians 5:16 challenges us to, "*Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*" Determine to focus on the Lord and to only act with His grace and patience.

Conclusion

Another aspect of seeing this fruit ripen in our lives is found in Colossians 3:12. Here we're told to "*clothe ourselves with...patience.*" A big part of good spiritual hygiene has to do with controlling our temper. In order to manage annoyances and bear with those who bug us, we need to clothe ourselves with patience.

The fruit of patience is in direct contrast to the acts of the sinful nature in Galatians 5:20: "*...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions.*" If we don't consciously surrender to Jesus on a daily basis, we'll express these carnal sins instead of the Spirit's fruit. We're to take off our angry clothes and put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

In Romans 13:14 we are told, "*Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*" Let us clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us emulate our Lord and do what He would do. Let's do it to His honour and glory!