

GALATIANS - SERMON 31

GALATIANS 5:22 — THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - LONG-SUFFERING - μακροθυμία

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INTRODUCTION: Read Galatians 5:19-23

The fruits of the Spirit are marks of the works of the Spirit in the character of truly saved individuals. The unsaved cannot manifest these traits properly or in proportion. The saved, though they manifest these traits, nevertheless, in this life do not manifest them in their fullest possible extent. Over time, in the believer these traits will become stronger. All of these traits will, to some degree be found in the believer. These traits come as a package. It is all or none.

Long-suffering - μακροθυμία is a combination of two Greek words meaning to be long tempered. One who is long-suffering takes a long time to become angry. This kind of person is slow to wrath. This same word is translated by the word *patience* in several other passages. Long-suffering and patience are synonyms and can be used interchangeably.

OUTLINE:

- I THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD - LONG-SUFFERING
 - II THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF LONG-SUFFERING
 - III THE REQUIREMENT OF PATIENCE
 - IV THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATIENCE
- APPLICATION

I THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD - LONG-SUFFERING

This concept of long-suffering contains two key elements.

- A First there is the whole concept of restraint. This is expressed by the ability to hold back a response that would otherwise be expressed. Long-suffering is restraint in the face of conditions that would normally provoke a passionate response. There is the idea of self-control in this. This is restraint in the face of ill-will. This is the idea behind long-suffering.

A long-suffering believer is one who is restrained in the way that he reacts to God, to others, and to troubles he experiences. This one does not allow his passions and impulses to control his life or flow unchecked. It is the opposite of exasperation or uncontrolled anger. Long-suffering involves an exercise in endurance under provocation.

James 1:19

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. . .

- B Second, there is a concept of cheerful endurance. This means being able to bear up under difficult circumstances, not with a clenched jaw, but with a cheerful attitude.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

We are to await the Lord Jesus Christ with a cheerful attitude and with hope.

There is no idea of grudging restraint in this word.

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. . .

What is long-suffering?

Long-suffering is the restraint of a negative response to a difficult circumstance while maintaining a good attitude until the matter can be resolved in God's time and in God's way. Long-suffering is patience under provocation.

There are three elements to this definition.

- 1) It assumes difficult circumstances coupled with restraint.
- 2) It assumes difficult circumstances coupled with restraint while maintaining a good attitude. We restrain a bad attitude and cultivate a good one.
- 3) It assumes difficult circumstances coupled with restraint and a good attitude until God is pleased to resolve the matter in His time and in His way.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord is long-suffering toward us (the elect).

II THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF LONG-SUFFERING

The greatest example of long-suffering is God Himself. There are many examples of God's long-suffering toward us in the Scriptures. There is much to provoke God to condemnation, wrath, and judgment in this world. Yet, God is long-suffering until His will is accomplished.

Exodus 34:6

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. . .

Numbers 14:18

'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'

Nehemiah 9:17

. . . But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

Psalms 86:15

But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

Psalm 103:8

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

Psalm 145:8

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy.

Joel 2:13

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.

Jonah 4:2

. . . Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Nahum 1:3

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

Clearly the Lord God Himself is our greatest example of long-suffering patience. Why is God so? He allows time for repentance so that He may show mercy rather than judgment.

The patience of God is His willingness to delay the expression of His anger and justice towards sin in order that time may be given to the sinner and the extension of mercy. This was Peter's point in 2 Peter 3 (quoted above).

The long-suffering of our God is salvation for many.

If we are to be imitators of God then we must be long-suffering with those who provoke us. Has God not been long-suffering with us over and over?

III THE REQUIREMENT OF PATIENCE

We are required to imitate God in all of His moral attributes. Patience (long-suffering) is one of His moral attributes and so we are to imitate it. A man who is impatient is a man unlike God. Beyond the general duty to imitate God (Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:16), there are also clear commands in the Scriptures that lay upon us the duty of patience and long-suffering.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

We (brethren) are commanded to be *patient* not to some men, but to *all* without exception.

Luke 21:19

"By your patience possess your souls."

The Lord Jesus Christ is urging patience upon us in the patient waiting for the coming of Christ.

1 Timothy 6:11

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Patience is one of the things we are to pursue throughout our life.

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance (patience) the race that is set before us. . .

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering. . .

These are clear imperatives unto patience and long-suffering in the life of the Christian. We also see this character in the mature men of God throughout history.

James 5:10

My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

We are instructed to use the prophets as examples of patience to imitate.

Jeremiah, Isaiah, Job, and the patriarchs who were marked with patience in their sojourn. Impatience cost Moses his entry into the land of promise.

2 Corinthians 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Note that one of the signs of the apostles was patience.

2 Timothy 2:24

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient. . .

Patience is a qualifying characteristic for men who will lead in the church.

Ephesians 4:1-2

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. . .

We are inundated with examples and imperatives unto patience.

Proverbs 14:29

He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.

Proverbs 16:32

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Patience is not only the mark of great understanding of mind, but it is also the mark of great strength of character.

Luke 8:15

"But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

Fruit is produced only through those who are patient.

2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

It requires patience to teach the people of God.

IV THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATIENCE

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. It is part of the moral character of God. It is exemplified in the mature men of God. It is commanded of us. Therefore, how do we become patient and long-suffering?

- A God develops patience and long-suffering in His people by His providences. God has determined that we be patient people. In order to accomplish that He brings providences into our lives that force us to learn patience.

Romans 5:3

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance. . .

We are not to seek tribulation, but when it comes, our first thought must be to learn what God has in it for us regarding patience.

James 1:2-3

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Providential tribulations force us to learn patience with circumstances, with people, and with God.

- B The Spirit produces patience by His power. In Galatians 5:22 calls patience a *fruit of the Spirit*. It is the Spirit who generates the patience in us. He does not produce patience in a vacuum, but He is the operative agent. It is entirely appropriate for us to expect providential circumstances designed to produce patience along with the Spirit's aid in the production of that patience.

C Patience is cultivated in us by our prayers.

Colossians 1:9-11

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy. . .

Among those things the Apostle prays on the behalf and for the believers of Colossi is *patience and long-suffering with joy.*

D We develop patience by our reflection. One of the chief ways to develop patience is by reflecting upon the patience of God toward us. The parable of the unforgiving debtor is a portrait of God's dealing with us. The forgiven debtor failed to reflect and imitate his benefactor as he should have. The parable pertains to us. We often seek God's forbearance with us and plead His patience in matters related to our sins. Do we reflect upon that patience which we enjoy from God? Should we not use a similar patience with others? God is the great example of patience with us and so ought we exercise patience with others.

Application:

We must be patient and long-suffering towards others. We are not to be patient with our sins, but we must learn to restrain our anger against others who sin. This is no justification for failing to address the sin, but we must be patient for the repenting response of others. By way of application we must learn patience;

- 1 parents with their children
- 2 husbands and wives with one another
- 3 single individuals awaiting a spouse (wait upon God for a godly spouse).
- 4 with fellow Christians, especially in our own churches.

While being patient we are not to exercise a pouting spirit or attitude, but rather a cheerful one.

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