

March 24, 2021 | Wholly Living

Week 5 | Gal. 5:22-26 | Patience

As we know, the 'Fruits of the Spirit' are virtues that correspond to the vices of the flesh Paul had indexed just a few verses prior in our passage. Paul's reasoning was that when the God of the universe takes up residence in a person's heart, some significant/obvious/undeniable changes will occur. And those specific changes are as follows:

READ: Galatians 5:22-26 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, as I've said each week in this study, we cannot cultivate nor can we produce these virtues on our own. Paul is insistent that each of these divine attributes *already* indwells the believer as they keep "in step" with the Spirit. They do not need to be worked on; instead, they need to be discovered.

In week 2, we tackled the first attribute of the Spirit: love. This love is the Greek word *agape*, and it is the self-giving/unmerited love we see God so often exhibit (cf. Jn. 3:16). Love is that place from which all of the other graces flow. Without love, there is no joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control. It is without a doubt the first among equals.

In week 3, we tackled joy. We learned that, aside from love, Paul would talk about joy more than any other NT writer. And the source of joy—that which fuels joy—is grace. This means that joy cannot exist without grace. Anyone who experiences God's unmerited aid and assistance knows about the kind of joy that transcends our circumstances. The believer has joy and can rejoice precisely because they do not have to earn their way into God's good graces. God's graces are freely offered, and this truth, in turn, makes our hearts glad.

Last week, Bob was kind enough to tackle peace. And as he eloquently pointed out, "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace." Our peace, or what can be thought of as the absence of internal conflict, is contingent on who we know. Knowing Jesus is knowing the true meaning of peace. When we lack peace, it is often the result of a lack of

scriptural contemplation. Thus, to have peace in our life, we must claim the promises in the Bible, direct our minds to scriptural principles (i.e., positive thinking), and meditate daily on God’s word, or, as we were told last week, “Take two Psalms and call me in the morning.”

Today, we’ll tackle the fruit of the Spirit that I so often seem to lack, patience. I cannot recount the number of times someone has told me, “All good things come to those who wait.” Often, this does nothing to help and only spurs me on to take impulsive action. Thus, at least for me, whenever I find myself being patient, it must be the work of God alone.

In the Greek NT, there are two words translated as “patience.” The first, and the most common Greek word used, is **ὑπομονή** (hoo-po-mo-nay’). The second, and the same one Paul uses in Gal 5, is **μακροθυμία** (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah). Now, while I’d like to say there is a clear distinction in how these two Greek words are used, it seems that there is no discernable difference.¹ They are, more or less, close synonyms. Thus, it seems patience, then and today is simply the capacity to accept delay without losing one’s temper; or, as one commentator put it, patience is “waiting with the *right* attitude.”² In fact, **μακροθυμία** (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah) is actually a combination of the words **μακρός** (makrós), which means “lingering,” and **θυμός** (thoomós), which means “wrath,” from which we get our English word, “longsuffering.” So, any way you look at it, patience is a word that literally designates the mental state of a person in a prolonged and unpleasant situation that they successfully endure without breaching some moral standard. In other words, a patient person will not fly off the handle, break under pressure, or lose their temper. Their minds are fortified for endurance.

Now, patience is the **answer** needed to those who provoke us and the **support** required to persevere in difficult circumstances. Provocation, often due to difficult people, will disrupt the heart and sharpen the tongue without patience cooling our tempers. Perseverance will be nothing more than a theory without patience giving strength to our resolve. In fact, whenever we interact with a difficult person or come to a troubling scenario and we resist the urge to be patient, forbearing, and longsuffering, we repel the very change we so desperately want. This is why James says that we should **allow** “patience” to have her perfect work in us that she might grow and mature us (cf. Ja. 1:4). Patience is like a trainer trying to beef us up for the challenges that lie ahead. And a tell-tale sign of immaturity is a lack of patience.

Interestingly, James had a lot to say about patience.

¹ Guthrie, George E., *James*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, editors Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2006), p. 266.

² Guthrie (2006), p. 266.

READ: James 5:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

i. A lack of patience leads to a lack of peace.

James seems to imply that difficult situations are the breeding grounds for contention. Especially considering the book of James was written to a group of believers who were under severe hardships, it's not a stretch to surmise that the worry and pressure of religious persecutions would've been enough to heighten tensions within the church community. This stress would predispose believers to discord and grumbling, making an already bad situation worse. Thus, James advises patience. He actually says it *three* times in the three consecutive verses: Be *patient*; be **patient**; Christian, be patient.

A breakdown of patience is preceded by a breakdown of camaraderie. Infighting may have many initial causes, but the commonality between all arguments is a lack of forbearing one another in love (cf. Eph. 4:1-3). They are to wait for the coming of the Lord in the same manner as a farmer waits for the early and later rains. They are to control their tongues and so avoid squabbling for the Eternal One who will judge every word spoken is standing at the door (cf. Mat. 12:36).

ii. A lot of patience leads to a lot of praise.

James gives them two examples of the kind of patience he was getting at.

1. The Prophets
2. Job

Despite overwhelming difficulty, the prophets of old steadfastly endured (cf. 1 Kings 19:9-18; Jer. 20:1-2; 28:6; Dan. 6). And despite overwhelming loss and suffering, Job refused to curse God time and time again (cf. 1:20-22; 2:9-10; 13:15; 19:25-27). Though many of these never experienced the blessedness in life, today, we, like James, call people like Job and the prophets blessed. Their examples spur us on. They give us cause to be patient, to endure, and persevere.

So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

But what sustained Job's patience in the face of loss? What fueled Daniel's resolve as he was in the lions' den? What keeps the farmer from despair as he waits for his crops to grow? What fortifies the believers' hearts as they wait for their deliverance from persecution?

A known end sustains a lasting patience.

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit teaches us that whatever this world may say, this is not the end, and this not our home. A better day is coming. A better world is coming. And while this world may be unbearable at the moment, it has an end; this finite world will give way to an infinite world.

Job can be steadfast despite his bad luck because he knew who was ultimately in control. Daniel can face the ravenous open maw of lions in a cold and dark pit because he knew even if it was the end of his life, it would not be the end of existence. The farmer can plant a seed and watch as the early, and later rains fall and know that a harvest day is coming. And the Christian who patiently endures and perseveres through difficulty knows that with the coming of the Lord comes an end of their patience. He will right wrong. He will make all things new. No matter how bad it gets, there is a better day coming. Keeping the end in mind keeps our patience secure. And while patience is never fun, its rewards are great. Or, as one philosopher put it, "Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet."

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | Wholly Living | Week 5

TITLE: Patience

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: