

Fruit of the Spirit - Patience

One of the most difficult things that we have to do in life is WAIT. When you are really looking forward to something it seems at times like that day will never get here.

Two weeks until your vacation from work seem to last two months. The last month of school seems like it should be called the third semester. 40 weeks of pregnancy gives you a pretty good idea of the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert, you can't even remember NOT being pregnant! They release a new Marvel movie about every 3-4 months but it seems like it's been years since the last one came out on disc!

There is a saying that "waiting is the hardest part" but there's another that says "You usually have to wait for that which is worth waiting for."

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

So far in the Fruit of the Spirit we've looked at love, joy, peace, and now this week is patience (longsuffering)

Patience is not just waiting....

"Patience is not simply the ability to wait - it's how we behave while we're waiting." ~Joyce Meyer

Patience might be better translated by the traditional phrase "longsuffering." It speaks of courageous endurance over time in difficult circumstances. This is showing patience in spite of troubles.

One of the hardest times of waiting is waiting on God.

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NKJV)

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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.

We think we are doing really well when we are patiently waiting on God but have you ever thought about how patient God is with YOU?

God is patient. And thankfully He is patient with US. We see over and over in the scriptures where God is described as slow to anger. And He has a great motivator for being patient with us.....the redemption of man.

The very reason Jesus came to live this life as a man and overcome sin and darkness was to redeem the very people that have sinned against us. Now He waits.....He waits not because it's fun, not because He likes a really long movie but because He knows the reward is worth the wait.

He paid a ridiculous price.....His blood, His very life.....He paid that price because He says YOU are worth it, He waits because He there's nothing He wants more than for all of His creation to choose Him in return.

Jesus is patient with us because He does not want ANY to die and go to hell but ALL to repent and live in His presence forever!

This 2nd Peter text is not just about God being outside of time, He is the creator of time after all, but it is showing us that time doesn't matter when it comes to what matters most. He will wait because it's worth it.

He is not slow in His promises....WE are slow in our obedience! He waits for us....

Jesus is focused on the Father's will. We see Jesus in the scriptures and He is constantly dealing with impatient people. He is dealing with people that lack understanding, people that are imperfect.

But what we see throughout the gospel is Jesus staying on track with the Father's plan. You would think if anyone would be in a hurry....it would be Jesus! He only had 3 years to train up these uneducated sinners to take over the continuation of the gospel.

Yet He took His time. He was patient. He was steadfast. And because He knew the reward would be worth it....He stayed the course.

Jesus taught in many parables that the spiritual life is like farming. He talked about seed and crops, planting and harvest.....and with farming, there is no rushing it. There are not shortcuts. Farmers can't speed up the harvest. They have to be patient, it takes time.

It takes time for people to grow and change, and in this life there are times of sowing seed and planting.....then there is some watering and some waiting. But you can't RUSH the growth.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

IN DUE TIME - when it's right.....at the proper time....

If you go out for pizza after church, you might be starving. You might be impatient as you wait you may get a little irritated that they are taking so long. Would you want them to take the pizza out of the oven early? Do you want it a little early even if it's not going to be very good? OR do you want them to take it out at the proper time.....when it's right?

WEED

Here's the weed that grows up and chokes out patience....it's mind blowing.....

Impatience (unable or unwilling to wait.....anxious, eager, restless)

- The impatient man tries to take matters into his own hands - we try to miracle grow EVERYTHING. I want it bigger and faster, more miracle grow, more water!

3 areas the weed of impatience is sure to pop up

- Impatient with God's timing
 - We think "You are God.....can't you do this faster? Do you know how long I've been waiting?"
- Impatient in trials
 - We think "Do you know what I'm going through? You have no idea how hard this is."
- Impatient with others weaknesses
 - We think "You shouldn't still be struggling with that. How long have you been doing the same ol thing over and over...."

As these weeds pop up, they cause us to have poor attitudes toward our situations, toward other people, and toward God. And when we get tired of waiting, when we are unwilling to wait, we try to take things into our own hands.....

If it's in my hands then I have taken it out of God's.....I'm now walking according to my sinful will and desires instead of His perfect will and desires.

Patience is steadfast in obedience to God despite pressure to deny Him.

Remember Jesus stayed focused on the Father's plan because He knew the reward was worth the wait no matter how difficult it became.

ARTIFICIAL FRUIT

Endurance - not all endurance is bad

- What is bad is when endurance takes the place of patience instead of coming alongside it
 - The goal is not simply to get through something....we can do that with poor attitudes, Patience is waiting with trust in God for the outcome to change, it is with a positive attitude that God is at work and you are the one that is going to benefit from His working.
 - We can endure things just by sheer willpower. But to have patience....that requires the work of the Spirit of God in your life!

Patience is the fruit of the Spirit, this grows in you as you grow in Christ.

The seed that the Spirit has planted in you is a continued awareness of the presence of God. This is the key to growing in patience. The Spirit produces the patience in us but we bear it, we bring it forth in our lives by a continued awareness of the presence of God.

Do you know that God is present in your life? Do you really believe that?

IF we have that in mind....God is present. He is here, He is involved in my life, my situation....

1. Trust His Timing

Jesus is pretty good with this timing thing. Remember Lazarus?

When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been dead for 4 days. He is FOR SURE dead....if only He had gotten there sooner, Lazarus would not have died. Jesus goes on to show His power over death and raises Lazarus from the dead.

Here's the thing about time and God. God doesn't work for time, time works for Him! When God is present and in control - you do have enough time, you aren't running out of it, and it IS on your side. Because time belongs to God and God is on your side.

Jesus has a different view of time than we do. He knows when it is "due time"

In John 2, He says "My time has not yet come", then in John 17, He says "the time has come"

2 Peter 3:8 (NKJV)

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

There are two Greek words used for time in the NT.

- Chronos - length
- Kairos - right moment

Both work for God. He knows how long and he knows when to make the move. All throughout the scriptures we see God's timing. It always works out. It's not a coincidence, it's He always knows when it's the right time.

2. See the Big Picture

We are often impatient because we are looking at the short term and we don't see how this is going to turn out good. We are afraid things are going to be messed up.

We begin to think that maybe God's plan isn't so great. In fact maybe I could do it better!
"God, if only you had done it THIS way.....I wouldn't be in this mess right now!"

Back to Martha...."Jesus, if only you were earlier....."

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

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

In our limited vision God seems to be a little slow. But He sees not only the right timing, but the big picture. He is zoomed out and sees things that are coming and how things affect other things where we are zoomed in and only see what is right here, right now in our life.

When you understand God has a purpose that is bigger than you, you can be patient and like Martha...when Lazarus walks out of the tomb, you will discover that God's delays are not necessarily God's denials.

He has a greater plan and picture in mind!

3. Wait with Faith

Patience is not just waiting but having faith and a good attitude while we wait. Do not view the wait as a waste of time. God works in our waiting!

Many of the heroes of the faith had to wait on God. Their waiting time was God's working time. He prepared them for the very thing they were waiting for!

Joseph was in the prison for a long time (after butler release 2 more years), doing time for a crime he had not committed. It looked like God had forgotten him but He was in actual fact working behind the scenes to accomplish His eternal purposes.

When David fights Goliath, he already had an intimate knowledge of his God.

- His faith did not come overnight; it came through the years of tending to his father's sheep.
- He fought off a lion and a bear and knew first-hand the presence of God, the power of God, the protection of God. No wonder he dared fight Goliath.
- With a sling and a stone, the things he is most familiar with. He has been playing with them all along.

Wait with faith that God is at work. One of the great things about God is that when He asks you to do something, He also gives you the ability to do it. You may not be able, but He is able in you. Let Him do the work in you while you wait.

We can't have patience unless we have knowledge, faith and hope. A man can be patient if he understands what is going on in a given situation. Even if that understanding is "God is working"

Ignorance and inexperience breed impatience, this is why children are naturally impatient.

Faith is an ingredient of patience. Christian patience is based on the belief that a sovereign God is at work in your situations.

Patience grows where there is a continual awareness of God.

Psalm 27:14 (NKJV)

Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the Lord!