

Patience

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Preacher: Elliott Lytle

[0 : 00] All right, good morning to everyone. Hope you're doing well. My name is Elliot. I'm one of the pastors here. So good to be with you this morning.

And we're going to be continuing in our series that we've been doing on the fruit of the spirit and how to be Christ-like in that. And so, so far in this, we've really touched on a lot of these like love and joy and kindness and the manifestation of these fruits in your lives really just describe what your life is going to be like more and more as you follow Jesus.

Like in many ways, they're kind of just the evidence of how your relationship with God is going. Like if his spirit is bearing fruit in your spirit. And about midway through a series like this, it's probably good to pause and remind everybody nobody knocks all of these out of the park 100% all of the time.

That's not a weight we're asking you to bear. But all of us should be seeing evidence of these things in our lives as we follow Jesus. And we should be seeing evidence that they grow.

And when we see that, what it really means is it's evidence that we're growing into Jesus. Because being Christ-like, we're not really just trying to follow Jesus for like personality enhancement, right?

[1 : 18] Like that's not really the goal. The goal isn't just to be a little less rough around the edges, a little nicer, a little happier. I mean, I hope those things happen. But the goal is to be Christ-like, like Jesus.

And so that's the thing to keep in mind as we talk about these fruits. And today, we're going to look at the fruit of patience. And there may be no fruit that we are in more desperate need of in our modern moment than this one.

I mean, literally, if you think about it, all of our culture, our entertainment, our economy, our technology, everything is driven. It seems to be tilted towards providing exactly what you want and providing it right now.

And so whenever you see someone that isn't ruled by that, that doesn't have to have their way right now, that can endure a weight, it stands out as a rare jewel.

And so we want to look at that this morning. But I think part of the problem we have up front is that it's actually a lot harder to recognize impatience than you might think. And the reason for that is impatience actually reveals itself in a lot of different ways.

[2 : 37] So when you think about what impatience looks like, what an impatient person looks like, you might think of like the lashing out kind of things, right? So like we can get, like somebody gets impatient and they start yelling, you know, or that thing where you wait, you know, 20 milliseconds too long to go when the light changes green, you know, impatience.

We know what it looks like when you lash out physically. Again, the internet, which thankfully we've been spared from some this week, is just full of videos and TikToks of people like getting into brawls and like shopping centers and parking lots when impatience with something boils over.

So we kind of know what that picture looks like. But there's actually other things that impatience can do or how it shows up in our lives that you might not think about. Like what about when someone cuts corners or compromises?

Like, you know, my career isn't advancing like it should. I am not at the place where I need to be at this stage in my life to get to where I want to go.

And so you start thinking, I've got to make this thing happen. I've got to start cutting some corners. I've got to start compromising my integrity. Or maybe, you know, you're longing for God to bring a spouse into your life and you know the kinds of things that God wants you to look for, the kinds of things that matter in a covenantal marriage relationship.

[4 : 04] But just frankly, that person ain't showing up. And am I going to wait forever and the clock's ticking, you know, I'm going to have to settle for what I get. That's another way impatience shows up in our lives.

It can also come about in kind of this silent stewing, right? Like the kind of impatience where something just eats away at you. So for like all the rest of the world, it might look to all observers like you're waiting patiently because you're not lashing out.

But really what you're doing inside is just growing discontent and grumbling and bitter. And so while you might not be lashing out, you're not being patient either.

And if that's true, it tells us something else interesting about patience, which is patience isn't just the ability to wait. Patience is not just the ability to wait a long time.

So think about this. Let's say you go to a restaurant with your family, right? And after you get there, you know immediately this is going to be one of those nights, right? Like it takes you forever to get on the waiting list, and then you wait and wait and you go to your table.

[5 : 13] And then when you get there, it takes forever for the server to show up, and they disappear, and it seems like 150 years before your drinks reappear. And then as you're waiting on your food, just all the stuff that irritates you, right?

Like people who came in after you are gloriously getting their food, and you're continuing to wait, and you're continuing to wait. Minute 20, minute 30, minute 35 passes.

And during that time, you might actually start talking about the wait, right? Like, you know, you start openly wondering aloud, like, what kind of show are they running here, you know? Did they have to go all the way to Ocracoke to get this fish?

Like, you know, you start saying things like that. And while maybe you don't lash out, you're kind of brooding the whole time, right? And maybe if you even tell that story later, you can say, oh, yeah, we had the most awful experience there, and it took forever, but we waited patiently.

Which often just means you didn't do the worst possible thing you could. Like, you're right, you didn't cuss everybody out, or you didn't, like, go punch the chef.

[6 : 17] You endured a wait, which, frankly, you couldn't do anything about anyway, but you didn't endure it well. You endured a type of suffering as you waited, but the mere fact that you waited didn't mean you were patient while you waited.

So I think that leads us to a really great question, like, if patience isn't just waiting, what is it? Like, what would be a good definition from God's Word for us to work with today?

Well, biblically speaking, I would submit this. Patience is essentially the fruit of being able to suffer well. Patience, the word in just about any translation, means something to the effect of forbearance or long-suffering, like literally every language you look that up that comes, like the biblical languages, has the idea of to endure or to suffer.

The Hebrew word has the idea of to bear or to bear up under. And literally, in the New Testament, the word that is used translates long passion, meaning waiting a long time before you become angry.

It's the exact opposite of short-tempered. It is long-tempered. You have a long fuse. And it's really easy to see what the opposite looks like.

[7 : 42] You know, we're going through this list of fruits of the Spirit, but the Bible in the book of Galatians actually gives a separate list that kind of tells you what the works of the flesh looks like. And in Galatians 5, it says this pretty clearly.

Now, the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger.

So, like, when someone says something like, I've got a short fuse, what you're really declaring to everyone around you is, watch out.

I might blow up at any moment. I mean, we use phrases all the time like, you're getting on my nerves. You're wearing my patience thin. You're skating on thin ice.

I don't have patience for that kind of thing. Maybe some of you are thinking, man, I said all of those in the car on the way over here. We're still really glad you're here.

[8 : 42] But we have normalized phrases like that to normalize impatience and anger in a way. And basically what we're doing when we say things like that is we're demanding that other people bow to our impatience.

We're effectively warning people around us, don't get on my bad side. Don't be noncompliant in a way that sets my fuse off. But the Bible tells us there's another way to do this.

Like there is a way to actually live where you grow in patience and you can suffer through that regardless of people's willingness to change and regardless of whether you have compliant circumstances.

Like a place where you're actually known not for having a short fuse but for having a long fuse. To be the kind of person that doesn't need perfect circumstances, perfect resolutions to move forward in love with people.

And that also means that if that's true, then patient has this interesting component to it that we probably have to talk about before we talk about how to get it because by definition, if you want to be long-suffering, that kind of means you have to be trained via suffering.

[10:00] And that brings us to a really sobering thought but an important one for patients which is patience has a unique relationship with suffering and hardship. In the book of Romans, it tells us not only that but we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope.

Then again in the book of James, it says, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

To be patient by default means you endure suffering while you're waiting on growth. It means you endure suffering while you're waiting on justice that hasn't shown up.

While you're waiting on a promise that seems overdue. While you're waiting on a season to end that just seems like it's never going to end. That doesn't mean you have to enjoy the pain or long to see it, but it does mean you can take joy in what it might produce.

So a few years ago, there was this movie starring Matt Damon called The Martian, right? And that movie was effectively, it was set in the not-too-distant future and kind of the backdrop of it is we're at a time in history when humans are starting to explore the planet Mars, right?

[11:31] Like we're sending manned missions to Mars. And at the beginning of this movie, this kind of freak storm forces the crew that is on Mars to leave in a hurry.

And while they're doing that, there's an accident and one of the astronauts gets injured and he's presumed dead. So they have to leave him behind. So the plot of the movie is this guy stuck alone on Mars, right?

Well, as it happens, he does survive and he gets back to their habitat and after he deals with his immediate injuries, he starts thinking about how am I going to possibly survive until another crew can get here?

Because it takes years to make that journey. And the very first thing that becomes evident is I don't have anything like the amount of food I'm going to need to make it until they return.

Now he's got some tools in the bag to help him. He's like actually a botanist by trade so he knows just about everything you need to know about growing food. And he's actually even got some potatoes that they were saving for a meal that he could grow.

[12:32] But the problem is Mars is a dead planet. Like the soil is sterile. There's no nutrients. There's no bacteria. There's nothing he can work with.

So how's he going to grow this crop? And the solution he comes to is he realizes he can actually use the bathroom waste that his fellow astronauts left behind to make fertilizer.

And so when they kind of depict that scene, it is as foul as you think it would be, right? So he is like, it doesn't sugarcoat it. Like he is gagging and it's stinky and he doesn't want to do this.

He is taking no joy in creating this fertilizer out of the mess they've left behind. But what he can do is rejoice when the first little shoots of that crop come up.

Because it means life. It means he's going to live. And there's joy in that. You know, I don't think when the Bible calls us to rejoice in sufferings, I don't think that means you have to enjoy the stinky things in your life.

[13:35] I do believe, however, it is possible for a follower of Jesus to cultivate a gratefulness for what it might produce, to embrace that. And the truth is, if you want patience, like if you really do, you're not just saying it, you actually want to be a patient person, you're going to have to accept that it is best formed in situations that require it.

And that means your number one goal as a follower of Jesus when you get into a painful situation can't be, how do I get out of this as quickly as possible? That can't be your number one goal. So at this point, you may be saying, and I would understand if you did, I'm actually not so sure I want this fruit. Like, I mean, on the one hand, everyone's a little impatient, right? I mean, what are we even talking about? Like, everyone, it's not the worst thing you could be, right, to just have a little bit of impatience. And I'm not sure, frankly, that learning to embrace stinky things in my life is worth producing that fruit. And again, I would understand that, but the problem with that thinking is impatience is actually more dangerous than we think it is. The late Tim Keller would often point out that impatience is a lot like lava beneath the surface of a volcano. [14:58] So it's something that's beneath the surface slinking around, waiting to erupt. And so many of the life-destroying actions that come in our life are actually just the result of impatience actually boiling over.

And so, like, just like a volcano, you might see some rumblings of that before you see the explosion, scorns and put-downs and cutting humor and coldness and sneering and just things that come with when you're not happy with how fast things are going.

And all that stuff is evidence that the lava is brewing. And when you see it, you should take that really seriously because the lava is playing a long game. Like, it is building towards a life-wrecking disaster.

Impatience, if unchecked, will grow out of control and it will eventually erupt in a way you can't take back. Or, even if it doesn't erupt, like, even if you're the person that can kind of constantly choke that stuff down, it's going to eat away at your joy and your peace and your ability to follow the Lord under the surface.

And eventually, I think it leads you to self-pity, which is a place where, frankly, you can be set up to do almost any evil thing. And so, impatience is something that we are all likely dealing with and our culture is teaching us to be impatient.

[16:21] It's more dangerous than we think. So, at this point, we have to ask, how do we get it? How do we get patience? Well, just like the rest of this series, you get it from God because the fruits of the Spirit actually just describe what God is like.

So, if we start by looking to the source of that fruit Himself, we quickly realize that God Himself is long-suffering. Another way to say that that shows up in Scripture is God is slow to anger. In the book of Exodus, He passes by Moses and He declares over Himself that the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. This is really interesting because God wants them to know that about Himself. This is after God delivers them and they make a golden calf. Like, after that, God wants them to know that He's long-suffering because probably they're thinking, is God going to wipe us out like we expect the pagan gods of Egypt would?

God specifically wants them to know, I am slow to anger. God is not given to fits of anger. He is long-suffering.

[17:44] And that carries over into the New Testament. In 2 Peter, it says, The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, as some count slowness, but He is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that everyone should reach repentance.

The Bible's basically full of God's patience exhibited by His slowness to anger. From having a fuse that is so long, you likely forget He even has it.

And if you stop and think what life could be like if you had that, like, what would it be like if you were like God? And in fact, that's actually what God wants for us.

God wants all of His followers to be long-suffering. There's this parable in Matthew 18 that Jesus tells of this king, this master who has a servant, and the servant's brought before him, and he owes a sum of money you could never repay, an astronomical sum.

And so he starts the process of what the consequences are for that, and the man begs him. He says, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything. And so the master actually, it says, takes pity on him, and he just forgives the debt.

[19:00] He just sends him out, right? And if you think about, like, what you should feel if you had this life-crushing debt, and it was taken away, and you go out, you would be like, I didn't see any way out of this.

It's like whatever your debt was today, it was wiped out. And you would think that would produce joy, but it says that right after that, like literally after he has a life-crushing debt forgiven, his first act is when he sees someone that owes him some money, like a day's worth of money.

It says he runs up to him, and he chokes him. Like he puts his hand on his neck, and chokes him, and says, pay me what you owe me. And that person says the same thing back to he, hey, please just have patience with me, and I'll pay you.

But instead of what the good master did, this guy, who's only owed a small amount, throws him in prison until he can extract every last coin. He has no mercy, and needless to say, when the first master, the king, finds out how he has treated this servant, it doesn't go well for him.

And that kind of story is a picture of how ridiculous it is for us to be short-tempered with someone, to be short-tempered with those around us, to have so little patience when God has this much patience for us.

[20 : 21] Like whatever they've done to you, whatever they owe you, it is nothing compared to what God forgave. That's how you get long-suffering.

God wants his followers to be long-suffering because he's long-suffering. The Bible's full of pictures about it. In Proverbs, it tells us that whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exerts folly.

In Proverbs 16, it's probably a verse for our moment, whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes the city.

We tend to think the strongest people are the ones that don't put up with anything. Like we actually equate anger and bombastic responses with being a strong person, and the Bible says the person who can control their own spirit is stronger than a person that can take a city.

And I think that few things in our day would testify to the goodness of God more than a person of whom this fruit of patience has blossomed in. In James chapter 1, it says this, Know this, my beloved brothers.

[21 : 35] Let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

One of the laments we should have that we should all share is frankly, that's just not what followers of Jesus are currently known for. Like the word Christian is not synonymous with patient and slow to anger.

And as far as the gospel is concerned, frankly, people don't care that you go to church. They care how your life unfolds. And so I think one of the most prophetic things you can do in this kind of culture, the most prophetic thing you can be is to be a person who stands out by your long fuse, by not being easily angered or agitated.

So how do we get it? Well, I think part of the secret is simply found in your perspective. To be long-suffering, you need a really long view. James, the brother of Jesus, writing to Christians who were gathered in little homes as they were being persecuted, says this, 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 till it receives the early and late rains. You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

[23 : 01] Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged because behold, the judge is standing at the door. And as example of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord and how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. James gives us like three really powerful picture images of what patience looked like. He says, number one, be patient like a farmer waiting for rain. A lot of farmers in the room, like farmers endure a lot of stuff through a lot of circumstances, but one of the things that's true is like you can't rush and plant early and you can't harvest before it's ready.

He also says, be patient like a persecuted prophet waiting on God, like prophets suffered in unbelievable ways. they kept holding out the word of God to people that didn't want to hear it and they kept crying out to God, how long until there's justice?

How long until there's redemption? And then he says, be patient like a man whose world has fallen apart. Job and his story, which we talked about before, is really just a picture of being patient for the Lord to show up and trusting he has a purpose and trusting he knows more than you do, even when you've lost, well, everything you can.

[24 : 26] James says, like a farmer, like a prophet, and even like this story from Job, be patient like that. And what's interesting is all three of those have something in common.

All three of those are looking to God for deliverance. And that tells us something else interesting that we kind of need to know to get past our impatience.

The root of our impatience is really between us and God. You know, what the farmer is really waiting on is not rain. It's God to send the rain.

What the prophet is really waiting on is God to make good on his word. And it's kind of wild to comprehend that the root beneath our impatience with others and our patience with life, it's really just an impatience with God.

It's like ultimately a heart that is saying, God, your timing stinks. I could do this better than you're doing. You are not coming through and I have to take things into my own hands.

[25 : 32] How long, oh Lord, is one of the most frequent prayers in Scripture. And at the end of the day, everyone's waiting on something. We're waiting on God to do something.

We're waiting on a spouse or we're waiting on a child or a job or we're waiting for healing or just relief. And we take it out on others. Sometimes we take it out on God, but God's timetable just doesn't line up with ours.

You know, you never see Jesus running around in a panic. One of the people in my community group this week commented how it was, it resonated with him that one of the words someone used to describe Jesus was relaxed.

And I do think that kind of, you know, resonates with us, the idea of a relaxed Jesus, until it hits our timetable in a way that seems disastrous. And you're not the first one to feel that, like all through the Gospels.

Jesus, if you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Jesus, if you wouldn't have stopped to help that woman, my daughter wouldn't have died. And we know how those stories end.

[26 : 44] We knew that his delay wasn't a denial. God's timing is never amiss. His long suffering is an act of love, always.

And so that means that in the end, if we can stop resisting it, the patience of God is actually an invitation for us to find hope. The Bible tells us that the patience of God is really an invitation to two things.

First, it's an invitation to let God's patience lead you back to Him. The book of Joel, it says, return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

And then again, in Romans, it says the same thing. Do you presume on the riches of His kindness and His forbearance and His patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

God's long suffering, like His patience, isn't just something that's telling you to do better, try harder. It's a reminder that it's not too late. Like, you can still come home.

[27 : 55] He's still suffering with you. I think the second thing it does is it allows us to let the patience of God lead us to hope in Him. Impatience leads you to take matters into your own hands.

Patience leads you to trust that God is at work and He has a plan. Psalm 42, why are you cast down, O my soul, and why is there turmoil within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for my salvation. You know, just like patience has this special relationship with suffering, it also has a special relationship with hope.

If you want to be patient, you are a person that is moving forward in hope. Hope that God is at work. Hope that God actually does see you and love you.

Hope that God knows what you're going through and He feels it and He cares. Hope that these present days you are in are not the end of your story. Hope that God will restore all things as He has promised to do.

[29 : 07] And so what starts off as seemingly innocent impatience turns out to be something that robs our life of joy and peace and contentment and it erupts like a volcano.

But there is hope in God that you can be different. Like you can actually shine like that jewel in this world that shows the long suffering of our Father. Let our prayer just be that God would give us grace to grow in that day by day and to embrace what He sends into our lives.

Amen. So as the band comes up today if you are not yet a follower of Jesus again thank you so much for being here like we treasure that you would take your time.

It's scary to walk into a church. I think the message of patience today is again just to remind you that let let God's patience lead you back to Him.

You may think that there's no way He can put up with you anymore. God has a really long fuse. Maybe He's calling you back to Him today. Paul in the book of Timothy actually says he says I receive mercy meaning He believed Himself to be one of the worst.

[30 : 20] I received mercy as the foremost that Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who would believe in Him.

Like Paul was saying let that be an example that I was one who sought to kill people who followed Jesus and He was patient with me. If you're here and you have any piece of you that wants to know that we would love to talk with you.

That door is open. If you are a follower of Jesus it's just a good moment to again patience isn't something that comes naturally. It's just a moment to ask where is impatience damaging my life? Like where is it showing up and lashing out or compromising or is it just brewing under the surface? And again you can consider Jesus' example in that.

In 1 Peter it talks about how Jesus when He suffered He had committed no sin He had done nothing wrong and He was reviled He was threatened He was judged unjustly and He returned none of it.

[31 : 29] When you think about the things of your lives you can think about Jesus who committed no sin who was unjustly put under a mock trial who was beaten and humiliated and crucified and He endured it all.

He persevered it all because of what it would produce and it tells us what it would produce. He did that. He bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might live.

He embraced the worst of things that we might live and be healed. So we're going to take a moment and lean into that. We come to a moment of the communion table and if you're a follower of Jesus again this is just this is a great moment to remember that like if you're wondering if He's long suffering He poured it all out to His very body and His very blood.

So just take a moment to just sit with that with Him. Just ask Him God where's that impatience brewing up and He'll show you and then you can come and partake of this in confidence that you have a long suffering Savior who loves you as much today as the first day you cried out to Him.

So when you're ready come and take that take it to your seat take it in gladness before the Lord. Father we give you this moment Holy Spirit come and have your way this time of communion we ask in Jesus name.

[32 : 55] Amen.