

Patience - A Great Virtue

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Introduction

Patience is like a flower that gives out the fragrance of love, faith, hope and trust. If the flower itself dies out there will be no sweet smell to please our senses. Patience is the capacity to tolerate challenges or delays without getting upset. Most of us would love to have more patience in our lives, but it's not always easy. We may find ourselves praying for more patience when we've been:

- Waiting on the Lord to give us clarity in our lives.
- Praying for a long time for God to change our circumstances.
- Losing our temper with others.
- Growing weary and longing for the second coming of the Lord.

We've all heard the saying, "Patience is a virtue." But how many times does that virtue show up throughout our day? Patience is tough to come by, especially in times when you need it most. But there are so many times in life that building this fruit of the Spirit comes in handy. Whether we are waiting in line or whether we are waiting on God in difficult circumstances, patience is a key that unlocks many benefits. In fact, patience is not only a part of the fruit of the spirit, it is also in the popular 1 Corinthians 13 text as one of the qualities of love. Patience is an especially tough quality to come by and to nature in our modern times. No matter what leads us to desire more patience, the Bible offers excellent guidance. Let's look to the Word of God to explore how to become more patient and what it means to have patience.

What Does the Bible Say About Being Patience?

We can learn a lot about patience in the Bible, which tells us that:

- Patience comes from wisdom.
- Love is patient.
- We should be patient and gentle with one another.
- God is patient with us.
- Jesus exercised patience on earth.
- We should persevere and be patient when waiting on the Lord.
- Patience will be rewarded.
- Patience is a fruit of the Spirit.

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Why Patience Is a Virtue

“To be patient is to endure discomfort without complaint” This calls into play some other virtues, specifically, self-control, humility, and generosity. That is, patience is not a fundamental virtue so much as a complex of other virtues.

An example from the life of Christ illustrates this. Jesus was very patient with his disciples. They were sometimes thickheaded, lazy, selfish, and slow to believe. Even from a merely human standpoint, we can see how frustrating they must have been. How much more irritating it would be for God Incarnate to interact daily with these men. In spite of Jesus’ miracles and words of wisdom, they were focused upon themselves and wavered in their belief about who he really was. To say that was uncomfortable for Jesus would be an understatement. Yet do we find him railing at his disciples over their foolishness and stupidity? Or making fun of them when they make mistakes?

Occasionally he does remark that his disciples are slow to believe, or he asks rhetorically how long they will fail to have faith in him, but these are always appropriate reminders about just what was at stake for them. These were fitting and useful rebukes, not petty venting. Notice that Jesus’ refusal to complain about his irritating disciples can be described as an exercise of self-control. Surely he would have been justified in blistering them with insults. It’s worth noting that his omniscience guaranteed that every possible joke and embarrassing remark was at his disposal on any particular occasion. This makes his self-control even more admirable.

His refusal to complain also involves humility, the conscious decision to lower himself by not exercising his right, as the holy man he was, to judge and dismiss his friends because of their faults. We might even say this is a form of mercy.

Finally, Jesus’ refusal to complain about his disciples is generous. In spite of their vice and thick-headedness, he remained no less committed to them and served them increasingly as their failures became more outstanding. While the patience of Christ is exceptional in many respects, the basic features of this virtue are surely the same wherever it appears. Patience involves such things as self-control, humility, and generosity, all of which are themselves virtues. So one might say that patience is a virtue because it’s an exercise of several other virtues.

Varieties of Patience

Active Patience: Active patience is very important in our lives. It is the sort of patience we need whether we are young or old. Patient waiting is not to be inactive, lazy or brooding. Tom asks his mother to play a game of scrabble with him. His mother says, “You will have to wait till I finish my work.” Then she adds, “If you help me in the cleaning, I will be able to finish the work quickly and then both of us can sit and play.” Tom agrees to help his mother. He waits for his mother to finish. This is active patience. Tom works and waits for his mother. Similarly, when Andrew wants a bicycle, his father says, “You will have to wait until we can get the money to buy it. You can contribute from your allowance and I will also give you an equal amount.” The waiting for the bicycle is thus active

waiting, with useful, constructive activity directed towards a definite purpose.

Patience stands apart from the feeling of self-will, that would demand immediate action. Self-will can make us arrogant and make us claim that we know exactly what has to be done immediately. It can make us feverish in pushing forth for quick results and petulant in obtaining these results. If we want to be successful we have to stick to the job with patience and not with stubborn inclination. The difference between stubborn behaviour and patience lies in the spirit with which the thing is done. It was with patience that so many new things were invented. At the back of these inventions, some people worked for years on an idea in which they had complete faith.

Patience with others: Patience should also be exercised in context with other people. This sort of patience comes out of kindness, friendliness, consideration, love and loyalty. These thoughts give us the patience not to condemn others easily and to forgive them, if they go wrong. Immanuel and Sam studied in the same class and the same school. They were neighbours. While Immanuel was excellent in studies, Sam was not good at all. He always needed help. His notes were never complete. He could not follow explanations in class. Immanuel always tried to help his neighbour and friend. He shared notes and explained everything that Sam could not understand. Rather than utilizing his own study time for this purpose, he sacrificed some of his play time. He knew that his friend needed help. His patience in dealing with his friend exhibited his consideration, love and understanding. Just like we want the other people to be patient with us, we should also

reciprocate the same feeling.

Patience with Ourselves

It is often easier to be patient with others than with our own self. Some people are so impatient with themselves that they lose control over their thoughts and emotions. Patience with oneself does not mean self-satisfaction or laziness. It means to have the humility to bring oneself to do better. Patience is also related to other spiritual and moral qualities. For instance, wisdom directs us to the perfect time to act or speak so that we are not considered hasty or stubborn. It enables us to measure the exact time for which patience should be exercised. Patience also displays the quality of hope, faith and trust. It gives us the moral support we need in order to face all challenges in life. Patience also effects our physical well-being. A person who is forever impatient or perpetually in a hurry will have many health problems. He will not be able to eat his meals peacefully. His attitude will put extra pressure on his heart. Not only this, his performance at office or at home will also suffer.

Patience with Other Living Creatures

Patience should not only be exercised with human beings. It is also important while dealing with the other living creatures on this earth. When we sow a seed, we patiently wait for it to grow into a big plant. Is it possible for the plant to give beautiful flowers as soon as the seed is sown in the pot? Certainly not! We patiently wait for the flowers and fruits by watering it everyday and taking great care of it. Animals also need our patience. If you try teaching tricks to an animal he

will only respond if you are patient and loving with him. Sometimes children treat their pet animals impatiently. This is not a good trait. Animals are dependent on us for love, affection and care. An injured puppy or a bird also requires a great amount of patience. It is our love for animals that makes us patient towards them.

Scripture on Patience

There are many places in Scripture that call us to practice patience. These Bible verses are not only meant to convict us but encourage us to pursue patience and to grow in it.

1. Romans 12:12 – Patient In Affliction “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12
2. Proverbs 14:29 – Patience Brings Understanding “Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.” Proverbs 14:29
3. Psalm 40:1 – Wait Patiently “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.” Psalm 40:1
4. Lamentations 3:25-26 – Wait Quietly “The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.” Lamentations 3:25-26
5. Ephesians 4:2 – Be Patient “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Ephesians 4:2
6. Colossians 3:12 – Intentionally Wear Patience “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Colossians 3:12

7. Hebrews 10:36 – Patiently Persevere “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Hebrews 10:36

8. Isaiah 40:31 – Waiting Will Renew Strength “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

9. Galatians 5:22-23 – The Fruit Of The Spirit “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23

10. Psalm 27:14 – Waiting Builds Strength “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Psalm 27:14

11. James 5:8 – Stand Firm “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.” James 5:8

12. Exodus 14:14 – Choose Stillness “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14

13. 2 Peter 3:8 – Eternal Time Doesn’t Feel Like Our Time “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” 2 Peter 3:8

14. Colossians 1:11 – Waiting Brings Endurance And Patience “being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.” Colossians 1:11

15. Proverbs 15:18 – Patience Calms Conflict “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.” Proverbs 15:18

16. 2 Peter 3:9 – God Is Not Slow, But

Patient “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

17. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – Show Everyone Patience “And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14

18. Colossians 1:10-11 – Patience Is A Sign Of Strength “so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.” Colossians 1:10-11

19. Proverbs 16:32 – Self-Control Is Better Than Warring “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.” Proverbs 16:32

20. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 – Patience Is A Key Element Of Love “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

What Are the Benefits of Patience?

We have instant access to the internet, immediate access to our emails, and quick access to tutorials, contacts, bookings and entertainment right at our fingertips. We are always on the go, living face-paced lives. But patience requires us to slow down. It requires waiting, and waiting is the enemy

of a fast-paced life these days. But patience offers us things that a fast-paced life often overlooks. There are many reasons why patience triumphs over impatience, but these are four great reasons to pursue patience in your everyday life.

- Patience honors God. When we practice patience, we are submitting to His will for us and choosing to act rather than react.
- Patience honors people. We can't avoid being let down or frustrated by others, but we can choose how we respond towards them. If someone makes a mistake, showing patience instead of agitation is a way of showering them with grace.
- It contributes to wiser decisions. When you are patient, you free yourself up to take deliberate time and consideration. Impatience often leads to rushed decisions that haven't been thoroughly thought through. Patience allows you to make wiser decisions and choose what is best instead of what is most convenient at the time.
- It protects your reputation. Most of us have been around people who get really angry. Some of us may be those people who get really angry. Explosive anger is usually a trait that some people are associated with. Unfortunately, it isn't a quality that most people appreciate in others and it has the ability to do much harm. You not only harm your relationships with others, but you harm your reputation. It does not take a lot of self-control to be explosive, but it does take a lot of self-control to be patient. It is better to be known for your patience rather than your impatience.

On the other hand, impatience can lead us to a lack of peace. When we act with impatience, we risk acting with poor judgment. Our attitudes toward those on the other end of our impatience are usually less than virtuous. And we make hasty decisions that we might regret in the end. When we grow in patience, it not only shows that we are walking in the Spirit. But we are also walking in love toward those around us. When we are impatient, we are a lot more inclined to respond with the flesh in situations. And when we lack patience with others, we forfeit dealing with them in love. Love is patient.

Conclusion

Growing in patience is never easy. In order to grow in this fruit of the spirit, it often means being in a situation that requires it. A good way to tell if an action is driven by patience or impatience is if there is an opportunity to do something in one's own power, or if there is an opportunity to wait on God to act. Can I lash out on this person now, or rely on the Spirit for a calm mind? Can I make something happen today or is God inviting me to wait for Him to

act? Relying on God's timing is always the patient decision. Relying on the Lord means letting Him work in His way and His time. His timing is different than ours, "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isaiah 30:18). Ultimately, building patience requires prayer and the Holy Spirit. While that may feel like a big challenge, it is important to remember that God is patient with sinners; "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). If God extends this patience to humanity, and believers are called to be like Him, He will teach those who ask how to be like Him.

Thus, it is not at all inappropriate to say that 'Patience is the mother of all virtues.'

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