Transformed By Fire Series – Fruit of Patience

Galatians 5:22-23

7/25/21

Let’s start our study by defining this fruit. The word we translate as “patience” or “forbearance” is “macrothumia” in the Greek. It’s made up of two words: “macro” - meaning “long” and “thumia” meaning “temper” or “explosion.” A synonym would be “long-suffering” which means it takes a lot to make you lose your temper. A patient person has a long fuse instead of a short one. It’s a long time before they “explode.” He or she is slow to become angry - amidst the frustrations of life - like being forced to wait 20 minutes to get your coffee.

Some other great synonyms for this fruit: “endurance,” “persistence” and “perseverance.”

* Patience is, “the capacity of quality of enduring pain, difficulty, provocation or annoyance with calmness. It’s the quality of persevering; of calmly awaiting an outcome; of not being hasty or impulsive.”

As we’ve learned thus far in our study - when we choose to bear the fruit of love, joy and peace, patience etc. - we are becoming more like our Lord. After all, these are fruits of HIS Spirit. These are the characteristics of Christ.

We see tons of examples of the patience of God in Bible.

* God gave the people of the world 120 years to repent before He sent the flood.
  + Think of it. Noah’s neighbors spent twelve decades watching that ark be built and hearing him preach, calling for their repentance, before God sent the waters to cover the earth.
* How about God’s patience toward the sinful Ninevites? Do you remember how frustrated Jonah was with the patience of God’s Spirit?
* Then there’s God’s statement to Abram in Genesis 15 concerning the Amorites?
  + They were inhabiting the promised land - but rather than immediately wipe them out. God chose to wait for over 400 years to bring judgment on them. These enemies of God would be displaced as God settled His chosen people in the land, He had promised them. But they didn’t need to remain enemies. In His longsuffering - His forbearance - His patience, God gave them ample time to turn from their wickedness and be forgiven.
* And of course, Jesus - God become flesh - showed His patience constantly - especially in dealing with the disciples.
  + Do you remember how calmly he responded to those quarrelling brothers James and John - and to Peter, who was always putting his foot in his mouth.
  + Jesus spoke of God’s patience toward the people of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday when, as He wept, He said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”
  + Later that week our Lord patiently endured beatings and crucifixion so that we can be forgiven.

I could go on citing examples, but the fact is God is patient with you and me every minute of every day.

* Paul refers to this in Romans 2 when he says to his rebellious readers, “Do you show contempt for the riches of God’s kindness, tolerance, and patience?”
* Peter says in 2nd Peter 3:9, “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.”

So. just like all the other fruit - the better we learn to be patient - the more we become like our Lord.

Of course, we all struggle with this particular fruit. We live in the microwave age and want things now!

* David Jeremiah says this is because we have made speed a “god” - and he’s right. In our age of hyper-connectivity, patience is becoming a lost art. More and more we expect things to happen immediately.

Almost gone are the days of snail mailing cards to people - sympathy cards, thank you notes, etc. E-mail and other technological advances are wonderful - but let’s face it - they increase our desire for impatience.

I came across the results of a poll conducted by the Associated Press. They surveyed over 1000 adults about Americans’ attitudes and behavior regarding impatience.

* It takes an average of 17 minutes for most people to lose their patience, while waiting in line at a store
* It takes about 9 minutes for most people to lose their patience on the phone,
* Women lost their patience after waiting in line for about 18 minutes. For men, it was an average of 15 minutes.
* People with lower income and less education are more patient than those with a college education and a high income.
* People who live in the suburbs are more patient than people who live in the city.

These and other stats show the sad fact that we are indeed an impatient people.

* There’s a story of two women who were leaving a church service. One said, “That was a great sermon on patience.” The other one replied, “Yeah, but he went five minutes long.”

Well, to be like our Heavenly Father & to give evidence that His Spirit lives in our hearts, we must go against the hectic flow of our culture and learn to fight the promptings of technology - and learn to slow down, so we can bear this fruit.

* John Ortberg, Jr., an evangelical Christian author & speaker, warns, “Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual growth. It can destroy our souls and keep us from living well.”

This morning I want to spend the rest of our time answering two questions.

1st - Where do we most often give evidence of patience?

2nd - What is the source of patience?

**(1) WHERE DO WE GIVE EVIDENCE OF PATIENCE**

Where do we most often give evidence of patience? Well, as I have inferred, patience is most often seen in our dealings with others. In fact, this Greek word, “macrothumia” - is primarily a relational word. It refers to being patient with people more than circumstances.

I’m sure you’ll agree it’s easier to be patient with circumstances, than people.

* If you’re waiting at a restaurant for a table and you can see the place is jammed - it’s frustrating - but you realize there’s nothing anyone can do about it, so you wait. But if you’re waiting at a restaurant and you can see there are three tables empty that just haven’t been cleared yet - you start looking for the manager.

So, patience refers to difficult people more than difficult circumstances.

* It’s the ability to put up with the faults of fallen, foolish people like you and me without losing our cool.

I think one of the main relationships in which we learn patience is as parents. Kids can really TRY our patience, can’t they? Especially babies and toddlers as they require non-stop care. They either need changing, need to be fed or need a nap that they don’t want to take, or they just get into things that make spills. Parents of little ones MUST learn patience to survive.

* There’s a story of a young father in a supermarket pushing a shopping cart with his little son, who was strapped in the front. The little boy was fussing, irritable, and crying. The other shoppers kept staring because the child would pull cans off the shelf and throw them out of the cart. The father seemed to be very calm; as he continued down each aisle, he murmured gently: “Easy now, Donald. Keep calm, Donald. Steady, boy. It’s all right, Donald.” A mother who was passing by was greatly impressed by this young father’s attitude. She said, “You certainly know how to talk to an upset child, quietly and gently.” And then bending down to the little boy, she said, “What seems to be the trouble, Donald?” “Oh no,” said the father. “He’s Henry. I’m Donald.”

Let’s face it, no matter what their age people can be frustrating; like the people in the car in front of me, who in the Starbucks line didn’t pull forward fast enough for me. But before you think or say an “amen,” remember - judgments like these I just mentioned convey an unspoken thought on my part.

* I’m thinking, “I am more important than those in front of me. My need to get coffee is more important than theirs? I am better than you. My time is valuable, and you are wasting it.”

Am I more important than the people in line in front of me? NO - they may be needing that caffeine more than I. Maybe they were up all-night working or studying for a test today. Am I better than them? NO!

Patience toward others shows up when we realize we are all on this journey called life and we all have needs. We all have things we need to learn. Back in the 60’s people would wear buttons that said: PBPGIFWMY – “*Please be patient. God isn’t finished with me yet*.” I know that campaign is 60 years old - but maybe it’s time to bring it back.

* We need to remember that Philippians 1:6 doesn’t just apply to ME - that “*He Who began a good work in -* ***not just me but you as well*** *- will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

Patience shows up in our relationships with others when we realize that we are just as broken and just as dependent on God’s grace as they are.

* Paul says, *“Be kind and compassionate with one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* Ephesians 4:32.
* We must “*be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love.”* Ephesians 4:2.

Whenever we are tempted to lose our patience with someone who is driving us up the wall, we must remember other “walls” are packed with people we have driven up there. Remember, patience means forbearance with others. It means, putting up with things people do, or don’t do. Remember, when we talk about “people” being frustrating, we are ignoring the fact that WE TOO are those people.

Who know what’s going on in their life? Sometimes they just need to be loved. We need to be a people who patiently love others - knowing God is not finished with them yet as He’s not with us.

Let me just ask, who tries your patience most? It could be a child, a spouse, a co-worker or that strange neighbor. It could even be a church family member two rows back. It could be your pastor. Who is it? With whom is God challenging you to bear this fruit most?

Ask God to empower you to be like Him in your dealings with whoever it is. Pray, “Please be patient with me God. Don’t be finished with me yet - -keep making me LOVINGLY PATIENT like You.”

**(2) WHERE DO WE GET PATIENCE?**

Of course, as I just said, we get it from God - patience is indeed the fruit of HIS Spirit.

But is required to grow this fruit is our faith in God. Patience is rooted in an all-encompassing confidence that there is someone in control of the universe or world, and our life. It is the conviction that God does work in all things for our good. Remember last week? Patience is first and foremost faith in action.”

* Patience “grows” in the faith that God uses even the frustrating struggles of this life to make us more like Jesus - it’s trusting God’s timing
* It’s the knowledge that whereas we look at the clock - God looks at the calendar - so He knows much more about our situation than we do.
* Patience comes from the belief that what God does IN US while we wait, is as important as WHAT WE ARE WATING FOR.”
* Patience is rooted in the Word of God where it says:
  + Romans 5 - Perseverance does indeed produce character and character hope.
  + Ecclesiastes 3:11 - God really does make all things beautiful in His time.

When we face trials, we must be patient and, as James tells us “Consider it pure joy, because we know that the testing of our faith produces perseverance and when perseverance finishes its work, we will be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

**Patience comes from the faith that waiting through tough times is indeed good for us**.

There was a marshmallow test that was done on children. Kids were told they could have one marshmallow now, or if they waited until the adult came back, they could have two. The study found that the kids who could patiently wait were more successful as adults. They had lower rates of divorce, lower rates of addiction, higher SAT scores, better salaries - and were less likely to become overweight.

So – having patience really is good for us. Like milk, it is a “fruit” that does the body good.

* Patience comes from the faith that God is still creating us, shaping us, & using everything that comes our way for our good and His glory.

I read about a pastor in Florida who used to have count-it-all-joy parties every now and then. He so believed this verse, that when he would face a difficult situation, he would call friends over to his house.

* He’d say, “I want you to come over to my house for a party.”
* They’d say, “Oh, is it a birthday?” “No,” he would say.
* “Uh, you got a promotion?” they’d continue. “No,” he’d say.
* “What’s the situation?” they would finally ask. “Well,” he’d say, “I’m going through this incredibly difficult crisis right now, and I’m having a count-it-all-joy party. We’re going to celebrate the difficulty, because I know that this difficulty is going to bring something of special value to my life. I don’t know what it is yet, but I want you to come and count it all joy with me.”

That should be the kind of faith that we must cultivate to bear the fruit of patience.

Conclusion

The Bamboo plant takes 5 Years to show growth. It doesn’t show signs of much growth until the 5th year, where in that 5th year it grows 90ft or more! What would happen if the farmer stopped watering it and fertilizing it after the 1st or 2nd year? It would never produce the blessing…With in those 5 years the roots are complexing and strengthening themselves to support such an explosion that when the plant becomes 5 it can support the massive growth to which the plant will experience.

There is an old saying that says, “Good things come to those who wait.” We know lots of very good promises in the Bible that are worth waiting for.

* God will supply all of your needs (Philippians 4:19)
* God will give you wisdom (James 1:5)
* God will get rid of all sadness one day (Revelation 21:4)
* Jesus will come back to Earth (John 14:2-3).

If you become impatient about these promises, you are saying one of two things.

* Either you don’t believe that God always keeps His promises
* You don’t believe that God’s timing is perfect.

But does God know best? Of course, He does! He knows everything, and He will keep His promises and release them at just the right time. If we believe this, if we have faith, then we should show patience like Noah did dealing with all those who mocked him.

God has given you His Holy Spirit to remind you of His truth so that you can be patient in all things.

* Psalm 37:7a Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act.

And finally, we can be patient because we know the struggles of the journey of life in this world are temporary - that one day we’ll be home. 1st Peter 5:1 it says that on that day we, “…will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 1st Peter 3:11b-13 he says we must persevere - we must be patient - because “We are looking forward to a new Heaven and a New Earth the home of righteousness.”

It’s the caliber of faith and patience that looks to the future - a faith that knows one day this life with all its frustrations and fears will end - and God will take us home. This sure hope fertilizes our patience. It keeps us going - because we know we are going somewhere. We are going HOME to that place where there is no sorrow or fear - no sickness or death and a place where there is no longer a need for patience.

So, developing patience is quite important for the Christian, as it should show a world that isn’t patient at all, that waiting for something important always pays off!