

*The Root of Impatience – Galatians 5:16-26*

Question: is there anything *distinctly Christian* about patience? Is there a link between having patience or being saved, or is patience just something that all of humanity would do well to have, but if you weren't born with that much patience, make a joke about it and don't worry too much about it? Is patience just a good personality trait, a certain quality some have and others don't, or is there something about it that's distinctly, uniquely *Christian*?

Well Psalm 37:7, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Timothy 4:2, and Hebrews 6:12 *all directly command God's people to be patient*. Then you have a million passages like Luke 21:19 ("By your patience you will gain your lives.") and Revelation 2:2, 2:3, 2:19, and 3:10 where Jesus commends certain churches saying, "I know your patience..."

God is not neutral or care-less about whether you are patient. In fact, Scripture often uses *patience* as an indicator of where a person will spend eternity, in heaven or in hell. ***Patience!*** It would *seem* that our patience, or our *impatience*, is much more than just a personality trait. Our level of patience says *everything* about us.

Galatians 5 will help us get at three questions: what *is* patience, what *isn't* patience, and what does patience do?

Verse 17 here is pivotal in understanding what we read. Paul says that there are only two kinds of works: there are the *flesh kind* and there are the *Spirit kind*. The two are completely different and *opposed* to each other. If you're walking by the flesh, your life will be filled with things like these: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Things *like* these. If it is, the Bible says you're going to Hell.

Conversely, on the other hand, the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These things indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, the presence of eternal life. And right there in the middle of that list, ***patience***.

- 1) What patience *is*.
  - a) **DEFINITION:** biblical patience is a Spirit-enabled calmness that one possesses and exhibits in the midst of an unpleasant circumstance because they are convinced of God's sovereign, good, and meticulous care. (\*\*THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT\*\*)
  - b) Biblical patience = "Spirit-enabled".
    - i) It's something that only the Spirit can give.
    - ii) The main reason for this is because impatience is part of our *flesh!* You've got the works of the flesh set *in contrast* to the fruit of the Holy Spirit. What does the flesh do? It produces "fits of anger". What does the Spirit do? It produces patience. So being *impatient* is a matter of still being in the flesh and living by the flesh. Being impatient is what we do naturally.
    - iii) But *patience* is the fruit of the Spirit. To *replace* our corrupt impatience takes a work of the Spirit of God.

- iv) And actually, biblical patience is something that the Holy Spirit *will* give! Not just that he *can* but that he **will** give it to the Christian.
  - (1) We learned from Romans 8 that the *truly redeemed*, born-again Christ-follower *has* the Spirit of God.
  - (2) And Galatians 5:22 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”
  - (3) That’s the *fruit* of the Spirit meaning, that’s what the Spirit produces. A fruit tree bears fruit. The *Spirit* bears these things.
  - (4) So if the Spirit of God is in you, you will be growing in all of these things.
  - (5) If you’re not, then the Spirit is not in you. And if the Spirit is not in you, you’re not a Christian.
- c) Biblical patience = a calmness that one possesses and exhibits in the midst of an unpleasant circumstance.
  - i) The most obvious part of our definition is that biblical patience is exhibiting and possessing a certain *calmness*. Patience means feeling and acting calmly. James 5:7-8 illustrates this.
    - (1) James says that a farmer is a good picture of patience. He plants his seed in the early spring. He waits calmly. He takes care of the weeds and the bugs and the wild animals. He watches for rain, but he doesn’t throw a fit if it doesn’t come everyday. He calmly waits for months until harvest.
    - (2) And that *calmness* is similar to the patience we’re called to have. It’s a *calmness* that we feel inside and that we then show by our actions.
  - ii) But our definition also says, it’s a calmness in unpleasant circumstances. That’s because, to be patient, you’ve got to be in a circumstance that could worry you, or that could disturb you somehow. It could be a really big kind of trial or it could be something mundane and small. Any situation, big or small, that has the potential for disturbing/worrying/upsetting/or annoying you. When you have and show a calmness *in that situation*, that’s patience.
  - iii) (See Rom. 12:12)
- d) Biblical patience = comes from a sure conviction of God’s sovereign, good, and meticulous care.
  - i) Biblical patience is a calmness that comes from us knowing he is caring for us with a **sovereign, good, meticulous** care.
  - ii) **Sovereign** meaning, he is over all authorities and his care for us is absolute. Nobody can thwart it or mess it up. What God wants to happen to us *will* happen.
  - iii) **Good** meaning, what God wants to happen to us will be good. God is making us into the image of his Son. His care for us is *always good for us*.
  - iv) And **meticulous** because his care for us includes every single breath, circumstance, event, “accident”, and everything in our life in between. God is sovereign over and controlling for our good even the smallest of things in our day.
  - v) So we’re arguing that, if you’re a Christian, the Holy Spirit is giving you a growing trust that every single circumstance, event, hardship, everything, everything in your life is part of God’s care for you. And the Spirit is giving you a growing trust that all of those things are actually for your good, as Romans 8 says. (“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” )
- e) SUMMARY: If you are a Christian, then contrary to your *flesh*, God’s Spirit is inside of you giving you an ever increasing confidence in God. You are ever more confident that God is in control and bringing about every event in your life, and because he is such a good, big God,

every event is for your good and for his glory. You're growing more sure of that. And because you are, you are growing *less* irritable, angry, and upset at small inconveniences. Instead, you are growing more *calm* in those situations. If the Spirit is in you, then you have that and are *growing* in that.

2) What patience *isn't*.

- a) A few things that *pass* as patience but are mere worldly substitutes.
- b) First, patience is not something we can judge externally. Primarily that's because patience is a matter of the *heart*. Patience and impatience start in the heart.
  - i) That means that some people who *appear* patient might be far from it.
  - ii) The Bible isn't concerned with that kind of "outward patience" or "external patience".
  - iii) Illustration: My *former* stepfather.
  - iv) The Bible isn't interested in us just having polite words and calm outward demeanors while we're at work, home, or with our children, all the while we're *boiling* inside!
  - v) God wants us to be calm because our *hearts* are resting in his good, in control, sovereign plan and purposes for our lives.
- c) The second thing that patience *is not* is care-lessness (literally, as in not caring about things)
  - i) Some people "appear" patience, but the reality is they are just passion-less, care-less people. They don't love things and they don't love people and some of them are actually so completely in love with themselves that absolutely nothing else *matters* to them.
  - ii) That might look externally like patience, but in reality, it's a selfish, unbiblical lack of care, concern, and love for others and for situations.
- d) Finally, patience is *not* man-centered optimism.
  - i) When you're two year old son is running around Shulte's produce aisle screaming and throwing fruit onto the floor, you can tell yourself, "This will be over soon, I just have to endure for a little while and he'll be grown up and things will be better." And you then act calmly. But that's not the Galatians 5 patience that Paul talks about here. You might call it a worldly patience or something like that, but it is *not* a fruit of the Spirit patience.
  - ii) God wants us to be calm, not because we know we'll be happy in a day or two, he wants us to be *calm right then* because we trust, he is in control, and if God is absolutely in control of every detail of this circumstance, then it will all be *good* for us as we become more like Christ and God is glorified.

3) What patience *does*.

- a) **Illustration**: waiting with a crying baby for Jessica

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