

Patience

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Date: 11 March 2018

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[0 : 0 0] So we're in a series on the fruit of the Spirit, if you've been with us, and we've looked at love and joy and self-control out of order a bit. And the fruit of the Spirit, it's in Galatians 5, 22 and 23, the passage we read at the beginning. And the fruit of the Spirit are, well, they're a description of a character that's been shaped by the gospel. And we've said a couple times already that if you notice in Galatians 5, it's the fruit of the Spirit. And the word fruit there is singular because it's one fruit in many forms. It's from Psalm 1, this person, this person who bears fruit is a tree. You're a tree planted by streams of water and you yield fruit singular in many different forms in season. And the first one, love, agape in Greek, that is the fruit of the Spirit. And the rest, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, these, the, agape, agape, love, it is the perfection of all the virtues. So what we're looking at is the one fruit-bearing person here. They all grow together or they all wither together and die together. And one of these branches on this fruit tree is patience. So let's dive right into patience. We're gonna ask what is patience, what's the opposite and the counterfeit of patience, and how do we get it and grow in it? So what is it? The word patience pops up 21 times in the ESV translation, the translation we usually read from here, but it's different depending on what English Bible you might be reading, and that's because there are a lot of different Greek and Hebrew, Old Testament Hebrew terms and

Greek New Testament terms that get translated into the word patience. And so it's a little bit tricky actually because the different words in Hebrew and Greek have different senses, different ideas behind them, but there are mainly two that the Bible focuses on, two senses of this word patience. And the first is a little word called hypomonade. It's in Romans 8, 25 is one of the main places you see it, and there Paul has been talking about the sufferings of the present age that we all can feel and see, the sufferings of pain and death and whatever else. And he says, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience, hypomonade, this one sense of patience. And what he's talking about there is a sacred holy waiting. Well, Samwise Gamgee said it very well when Frodo was looking at a destroyed gondor in the return of the king and without hope to carry the ring any further. And Sam said this, it's like in the great stories Mr. Frodo, the ones that really mattered, full of darkness and danger they were, and sometimes you did not want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? But in the end it is only a passing thing, this shadow.

Even darkness must pass, a new day will come, and when it comes the sun will shine out all the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you. That meant something, even if you were too small to understand why. But I think I do understand why now Mr. Frodo. The folks in those stories, they had all the chances to turn back, but they never did. They were holding on to something, something worth fighting for. Patience for Paul in Romans 8 and a lot of other places in the Bible is sacred waiting for the return of the king. It's holding on in the midst of the shadow, waiting for Christ to come back. And so that's one of the primary senses of patience throughout the Bible. We're not talking about that one tonight. That's for another day. Because in Galatians 5 they use a different word and a different concept, a different sense to the word patience. In

Galatians 5-22 it's a very, it's a entirely different Greek word and a group of words that surround it. And the old, in the old English, in the King James Version, the idea of patience that's being talked about in Galatians 5 is often called forbearance, if you're familiar with that older way of speaking, forbearance. And that means at the surface, well it's the normal sense of patience that we all think of at a more popular level, it's the ability to remain calm and sober and equal and collected when you're being sinned against. So we read from 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 Corinthians 13-4 Paul says he defines it. He says the fruit of the Spirit, love, agape, is patient. And it's the same word that he uses in Galatians 5-22, macrothemia, love is macrothemia, it's patient. And then he goes on to say he

defines it. He says it's bearing with other people. In other words he's saying patience, this sense of patience is the ability to not be easily frustrated. But there's a principle definition in the Bible for this idea of patience, this sense of patience. There's a principle phrase that describes it and it's mostly in the Old Testament. And the

Old Testament, the Hebrew scholars, when they translate the Old Testament they'll use the word patience and a little phrase interchangeably. So sometimes in the Old Testament you'll see the word patient and sometimes you'll see this little phrase and we read it in Proverbs 14, 29 and 30 and it's this, whoever is patient or sometimes it's translated like this, whoever is slow to anger has a great understanding. And so the principle definition, the principle idea of patience, the patience of Galatians 5-22, the fruit of the Spirit is being slow to anger is the definition in the Bible. Now Jesus in Matthew 18, 23 and following, he's sitting there and Peter comes to him and Peter says, my Lord, how many times should I forgive somebody when they sin against me? And Peter says, is it seven times? Which for Peter was a lot, that was a full number corresponding to each of the days of the week, right? All week long in other words is what Peter was saying. And Jesus says, no, you should forgive 77 fold. Now sometimes it's ambiguous, it can either say, it either says 77 fold or 70 times 7 and you'll see it both ways but Jesus says 77 fold and I think it's 77 fold because the commentators will tell you there that what Jesus is doing is he's referencing

[7 : 56] Genesis chapter 4 when Lamech, one of the sons of Cain, it says of Lamech in Genesis chapter 4, the sons of Cain, that anyone who did anything to him, he would return vengeance 77 fold and it says that when someone would strike him, he would murder them and return vengeance 77 fold. And so Jesus is saying here to Peter, how many times should you forgive? Well, Lamech returned vengeance 77 fold and just as much as Lamech showed vengeance to people who acted against him, so you should show forgiveness in the same manner. In other words, one commentator puts it like this, just as in those old days, there was no limit to the hatred and vengeance of Lamech, so among Christians there is to be no limit to mercy and forgiveness. And so Jesus then says, let me tell you a story to make sense of you when I make sense for you. He says there was a king and there was a man who owed the king 10,000 talents, which is well over like a million plus pounds today, a lifetime's worth of money and it was past due and the law at the time states that if you can't pay your debts, then you and your family are to be sold into an as indentured servants into servants and so the king turned and said sell sell the man and his family and the man falls upon his knees and begs he says oh king show me macro themia show me your patience show me your patience and the king says very well and he forgave the man his debt and let him go in peace and that's the definition that's the definition of patience Jesus says. Patience is a willingness to pass over people's sins and to show mercy. It's slow to anger, quick to mercy. That's the definition of patience in the Bible. Okay so secondly, what's its opposite and its counterfeit?

Well what's the opposite of patience? The opposite of patience is impatience. Easy enough. Point three right? Well no it begs the question what is impatience? What is impatience? And we can go back to 1 Corinthians 13 where Paul says love is patient and then he goes on and he says love is not irritable, it's not resentful, it's not rude, it bears with the faults of others meaning that impatience is quick to irritability, quick to resentfulness, quick to rudeness and an inability to bear with the faults of others. In other words it's being easily annoyed, easily frustrated, it's a lack of agape is what Paul says and being irritable, prone to frustration, quick to rudeness, all of these are actually categories of anger, their degrees of anger and that makes sense because we saw that the Bible defines patience as being slow to anger, quick to mercy and that means impatience then has to be what? It has to be quick to anger, slow to mercy. Patience is slow to anger, quick to mercy and impatience is quick to anger, slow to mercy. John Chrysostom he's a usually considered the best preacher of the first 500 years of the church or something like that. He lived from 349 to 407 AD and he writes a lot about patience and anger and he says that the opposite of patience is anger and he says this he writes on anger unrestrained by the patient heart and that's what he says he that is in a passion of anger is like a drunken man who is vomiting but even more than a drunken man who is vomiting the angry man's veins are distended his eyes inflamed his bowels racked he vomits forth words far more filthy than that food everything he utters is crude nothing is duly digested since his passions won't allow it. So Chrysostom is saying he's using a metaphor and he's saying that just as when you're I was last Sunday if you happen to be here and

I'm sure Derek said it when you are sick and you you have to vomit your body will not not allow your body forces you to right the muscles push the toxins out of your stomach and you don't have a

choice and Chrysostom is saying that the impatient person who has let their anger go uncontrolled for much of their life gets into this situation where like the inability to control your sickness you're unable to control your anger and when you're acted against in an annoying frustrating situation or even in a situation where someone sins against you it rises up out of your control and what he's getting at there is that impatient starts in small ways as being easily annoyed easily frustrated the eye rolls and things like that but it grows because these are all small types of anger and anger is addictive and it gets bigger and bigger and this exactly what we learn we talked about this actually in our in our wisdom series there's a proverb that's about just this Proverbs 19:19 a man of great wrath will pay the penalty for if you deliver him you will only have to do it over and over and over again meaning that a man of great wrath will keep getting into the same situation over and over and over again because his anger is uncontrollable I was heard a pastor this week illustrate a point about the addictive nature of anger in the impatient heart and he he read a letter from a psychology today article and this was a letter to the editor a letter to a counselor from a reader from a listener and he wrote this dear counselor you told a mother last week that had a three-year-old with anger problems to kick the furniture to let him get it out of his system we've all been there before huh my younger brother used to kick the furniture when he got mad he is 32 years old now and he still kicks the furniture what's left of it but he is also kicking other things he's kicking his kids and his wife and anything else that gets in his way and the person that was referencing that talked about how the article discussed that how in the 60s and 70s in the psych psychology world they were really emphasizing that in order to defeat anger you need to have these moments where you actually are allowed to let your anger out and you kick the furniture you break something or whatever and then that of course the counselors realized later what the Bible teaches us and Proverbs and that's that it doesn't work at all like that because anger is addictive that's what impatience grows and it rolls like a snowball and it gets worse and it works worse and it's in the example that this writer is talking about here so the opposite of patience is a snowball of anger but wait a minute but wait a minute the counter what's the counterfeit and here's what we have to say if impa if patience is being slow to anger quick to mercy and impatience is being quick to anger and slow to mercy what we're not what we're not saying here is that patience follow me wait for it patience is not not not anger in other words too many negatives and that's in us in other words the ideal a patient person is not a person who never gets angry patient people a patient heart also gets angry because what was the definition of patience slow to anger but not not angry not never angry the patient person has to get it must get angry just listen to Paul in Ephesians 4 he says at the beginning of Ephesians 4 be entirely humble and gentle be patient bear with one another in love and then just a few verses later this is what he says and be angry and do not sin so patience is being slow to anger but it's not not being angry here's John Chrysostom again talking in the same book about about patience and anger and he says this he who is not angry when there is a cause to be angry also sins for unreasonable patience is the hotbed of many vices it fosters negligence and so look if the opposite of patience is inpatience and inpatience is being quick to anger the counterfeit of patience what might look like patience on the surface but isn't patience at all is when a person never never gets angry never gets angry because of a total passivity a total apathy in life that they always are calm on on that they're never angry at all but and it's a result of apathy not love CS Lewis says it well that the ultimate form of hatred is not rage but apathy apathy can masquerade as patience someone so calm never angry about anything Lewis says if we don't get angry about anything then that means we don't love anything and anyone who loves has to get angry sometimes and that's why the definition of patience is not never getting angry but slow to anger quick to mercy you know there's so much to be angry about isn't there there's so much to be angry about abortion for example and abuse frivolous blasphemy of God in the pop culture so much there's so much for a Christian to be angry about and so wisdom which we spent a long time on last semester with patient people truly patient people are wise because they know they're slow to anger but they know when to get angry and they know how to get angry and they know where to express anger and when to express anger and who to express anger to Jesus again Jesus example you know Jesus would turn away a harsh word he would turn away an insult with a gentle with gentleness he would say when you get slapped in the face be patient and turn the other cheek and give them the other side as well and then he would walk into the temple and he would flip over the tables and chase out the moneylenders with a whip in his hand patience is not never getting angry it's being slow to angry quick to murder it's being wise it's knowing when to when to get angry righteous anger righteous anger does not create evil it dispels evil and that's exactly what

Jesus was doing in the temple he Jesus anger was never evil anger but it was always anger that dispelled evil and so Paul gives it a simple phrase a simple answer the patient person gets angry and when they do they speak the truth in love they speak the truth in love and they they do it in order to restore restore the circumstance redeem the person and what that means is that patience means not is a big no to passive aggressive anger that hides itself under the surface appearing to be patient and creating deep tension in a relationship over time and it's a deep no to losing one's temper on the other side but it's a yes to anger that's pointed at dispelling evil to restoring the circumstance for a person speaking the truth in love that comes out of a patient patient heart Paul Paul is saying okay so thirdly and finally and briefly how do we get it how do we grow in it well look the first thing is that it's the same thing that we've been doing saying with all the fruits of the spirit and that's that when you when you go through the fruits of the spirit you have to be willing to evaluate yourself and ask what where am I here with honesty with openness willingness to admit where we are with patience or peace or joy or whatever it is and repent of our issues in that domain and we may very well need to ask somebody else where we are because if you struggle with impatience and easily irritable easily annoyed quit to be frustrated quick to be angry if it's snowballed and it's become something that's more characteristic of a regular issue with anger in your life then it's so incredibly hard to face up to it it's so incredibly hard for me to say to my wife that I know that I struggle with impatience as we're talking about this afternoon just the question am I an ear and am I an irritable person man it's tough to say yes and be honest with ourselves if we are and so it's hard to own we need we need we might need help and there are people in our lives that can tell us that for sure secondly we have to look at God so we said from the first week that the fruits of the spirit are the communicable attributes of God meaning this you know just like the the doctors will say that there are communicable diseases and you can communicable disease of course is one that you can catch and that's a bad thing but with God his communicable attributes they're the attributes of God that you can catch that you can take hold of that you can get that can you can actually become like God you can truly be the image of God and the fruits of the spirit those are the communicable attributes and from the beginning to the end of the Bible from Leviticus to Peter we get this command be holy as I am holy and it's God saying look Christian take take hold of the communicable attributes and fight for them and change and grow up into them and learn patience and here here's look at God Exodus 34:6 God passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord the Lord compassionate and gracious slow to anger abounding in love and faithfulness compassionate and gracious God patient slow to anger abounding in love and faithfulness he's [24:24] a God of deep love and he's a God of deep patience he waited he he has he did not exhaust his anger on anybody he what he waited he waited he waits do you not know that he shows his patience and kindness in order he waits that we might repent that we might have a season to repent this is what God is like and so be holy as I am holy we have to look at God but but thirdly and finally the the only way we're gonna get to be holy to be like God as he is holy the only way is that we actually have to first see the source of patience the source of patience and you know we all know this we've all felt this that that patience which is just the flip side of the coin of forgiveness means swallowing and absorbing people's sin against you people's irritability people's lack of social awareness of people's in hospitality people's rudeness and resentment that's what patients it's swallowing it it's absorbing it it's letting it go deep down into your gut and faith and and eating it yourself taking it into your own body and absorbing the wrath and the anger from other people that's what it is but how how could you possibly do it and just to close we read from 1st Timothy 1:12 to 17 and that's Paul's little testimony to

Timothy and he's addressing there the question that people are asking how do I know that Jesus is trustworthy to save that he really can do what you're telling me he can do and that's forgive my sins and bring me into the hope of everlasting life and this is what Paul says Paul says let me just put it in colloquial terms he says look let me tell you about what happened to me he says at the beginning verse 12 I deserved God's anger and then he goes on this list of all the things he was he says I blasphemed in other words I used God's name as a curse and I looked at Jesus Christ and I said he is not God that's what Paul saying I blasphemed him and then he says I persecuted and he's referencing there acts 8:3 where he says I ravaged the church which is a Greek word that's always used for a wolf meaning I treated the church I went after the church I went after Jesus Christ and anybody who claimed him like a like a with an animality with a ferocity like of a wolf hating them what he's talking about is an absolute impatience and he says in other words he murdered anybody

who would claim Jesus he murdered them and then he says I was the unyielding opponent of God he ridiculed the cross he pointed and spit and said you're a joke he ridiculed the cross just like in Matthew 26 and then he says and here's why you can trust him because of me look look at did I did you hear what I who I was and he says I am literally the worst I was the worst and this is what he says verse 16 I received mercy for this reason this is why God has given me mercy for this reason that in me the foremost sinner Jesus Christ might display his perfect macro themia his his perfect patience see you think if you want if you want to know what patience looks like you look at me you know what

I was and you know that Jesus Christ used me to display perfect patience he was so slow to anger with me even when I pointed at him and spit at him and said you're not God he he showed his perfect patience with me Jesus Christ was so patient that on the cross he absorbed it all the very definition of patience he absorbed it he swallowed every bit of it the blasphemy the hate the anger the murder the unyielding opposition he swallowed it and it killed him and then he conquered it and it's in the fact that he conquered it he conquered the impatience that you can be truly patient it's that victory the ground of that victory that can truly make a person patient because he was patient first which means patience has an immense power it has a deep power to save that's exactly what the gospel is the patience of Jesus Christ to save and patience can patients can change other people's lives and your daily encounters it can it could be a shocking mercy in somebody's life when you show them deep deep patience slow to anger quick to forgive them it might bring them to faith let's pray father we ask now that you would give us all patience that we would be slow to anger quick to forgive like the Lord Jesus Christ we pray for this in Christ's name Amen