



## **The Beauty of Jesus**

**Galatians 5:22-23**

**Fruit of the Spirit - Patience**  
**Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2019**  
**Preacher: Roy Summers**

### **Introduction: Four brief points about Patience**

*Patience is a virtue*  
*Possess it if you can*  
*Seldom found in woman*  
*Never found in man!*

This morning we consider the fourth fruit of the Spirit. If the first three, “love” and “joy” and “peace” are “Sunday” or “heavenly” virtues, patience, the fourth, is a gritty Monday-Saturday work-a-day grace! Here are four short statements about the wonderful grace of patience to start us off.

First, Patience is a right attitude in our hearts towards difficult events and irritable people. You don’t need patience when a birthday party or holiday comes your way, or when you’re meeting up with good friends! No, patience is a right attitude in our hearts towards difficult trials and potentially difficult people. Patience is a peaceful attitude when we must wait in a long supermarket cue, or when we’re stuck behind a tractor. Patience is a slow response to a child who scribbles on the wallpaper for the tenth time, or to a loved one, who lets us down - again. Patience is a calm repose, when unexpected suffering stops by our house one day and then outstays it’s welcome by months, or even years — in spite of a thousand prayers.

The second thing to say straight off is that patience is supernatural. It’s a fruit of the Spirit, a product of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts. It’s not something we can drum up. I heard a man once say that he could teach himself patience by joining the longest cues in the supermarkets! But Paul says that patience flows from the supernatural work of God living in our hearts!

How does he work his patience in us? According to Scripture, the Holy Spirit forges patience in our hearts through trials, adversity, and afflictions: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.”* (James 1:2) Perseverance and patience are twins. *“We rejoice in sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance”* (Romans 5:3). At first it sounds counter-intuitive - you would have thought that difficulties would make us more fretful and irritable and more impatient. But no, trials build patience! Through difficult people and through difficult circumstances, God develops the precious gift of patience in our hearts. This is the third point.

Fourthly, our model or example for patience is the Lord God himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, his Son. *“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Psalm 103)* *“The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Numbers 14:18).* The Scriptures are filled with examples of God’s vast patience. God waited 400 years for the Canaanites to repent of their wicked deeds! *“God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built...” (1 Peter 3:20)* For about a hundred years Noah preached, “turn from your wicked ways, God is going to send a flood.” The Lord Jesus chose a man who was a Christ-hater and a church-destroyer to preach the Gospel to the gentiles. Why? *“so that in me, (says Paul), the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:16)* “If God could save me”, Paul could preach, “he can save anyone!”

Perhaps there is someone here this morning: you heard the Gospel many times but you have refused to respond to God’s call! Perhaps you think God’s patience has run out for you! “I’ve resisted God for so long, God must be finished with me.” No! God is patient even with you! “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, will be saved.” (Romans 10:13) and that “everyone” includes you! Like the prodigal son’s father, God patiently waits for sinners to turn around and come home! God’s patience is so great that he has delayed the promised return of his Son to the world for 2000 years so that everyone can come into God’s kingdom! *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, not everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)*

Add to all these Scriptural illustrations of God's patience our own personal examples of how patient God has been with us! Perhaps we went astray, and the Lord patiently brought us back. Perhaps he asked us through his Word to do this or that, but it was a long time before we obeyed! How patient the Lord is with his people!

There are three kinds of patience, which I believe the Lord wants to develop in our hearts: He wants us to

- Be patient with ourselves,
- Be patient with others, and
- Be patient with God

### **#1 Be patient with yourself**

*Give God's grace time to change you*

*“By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10)*

This first kind of patience might seem a strange kind to include, but we cannot be patient with others, the second kind of patience, unless we are first patient with ourselves. Jesus once taught, *“Love your neighbour as yourself.....” (Matt 22:39)* Love other people the way you love yourself. If you love yourself poorly, you’ll love others poorly, if you do not look after yourself, you won’t be able to look after others either.

Suppose you never give yourself enough rest. We all need rest, that's why God turns out the big light at night and turns on the soft one. That's why he gave one day is seven to rest. We're meant to rest. But suppose you worked 7 days a week and 18 hours a day. Well, if that's how you take care of yourself, then that's how you will also look after your loved ones: you won't be able to give them the rest they need because you will assume that 7 days a week, 18 hours a day is normal! We can't love others in a different way to the way we love ourselves.

In the same way, if you are not patient with yourself, you won't be patient with others. If you're hard on yourself, constantly bemoaning your own failures and foibles, unhappy with what God has made you, forever setting the bar so high that you are never content with anything you are or do (perfectionists harken unto me!) then you'll be impatient with others, because you can't love other people differently from the way you love yourself.

So are you patient with yourself? Are you giving God time to work in your own heart and life?

The apostle Paul is a wonderful example of a believer who had learnt to be patient with himself. He knew he had not yet arrived, he knew that he had many faults, "nothing good lives in me," "Oh wretched man that I am." (Romans 7:18, 24) But he took obedience to Jesus Christ seriously, working out his salvation with fear and trembling, constantly forgetting what was behind and continually straining towards what was ahead. And he knew that he was loved by God in spite of his failings. He knew that he was right with God by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and so he was patient with himself, happy in his own skin, putting it like this: "*By the grace of God I am what I am*" (1 Corinthians 5:10). He wasn't what he once was (a Christ-hater), nor was he yet what he once would be (perfected saint in heaven), but by the grace of God working powerfully in him, he now was what he was. Be patient with yourself, allow God's grace time to change you.

## **#2 Be patient with others**

*Bear with the weaknesses of others*

*"be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)*

And when we are patient with ourselves, we'll be able to be patient with others: with neighbours and colleagues, husband or wife, son or daughter, home-group member, brother or sister in Christ. The Greek word behind patience in Galatians 5:22 is best translated as *long-suffering*. It means "putting up with someone's shortcomings for a long time." This variety of patience is only learnt in living fellowship with God's people. You can't learn this kind of patience on a desert island, all on your own. Jesus gathered 12 men together in a group so that they could learn patience by having to rub shoulders with each other day after day, after day.

*"To dwell in love with saints above,  
Oh that will be glory"  
"But to dwell below with saints we know,  
Ah, that's a different story"*

One day Peter asked Jesus, "*Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?*" Perhaps Peter was struggling with a fellow disciple: perhaps Thomas was in one of his melancholy moods! Peter thinks he is being really patient by suggesting to Jesus that he

should forgive his brother up to 7 times! How does Jesus respond? *"I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times."* What Jesus means, is forever: that is what *"Long-suffering"* means, forgiving 490 times if necessary! *"Be patient, bearing with one another in love."* (Ephesians 4:2), *"Clothe yourselves with ...patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another..."* (Colossians 3:12)

Is there someone in your life who is annoying you at this very moment? Ask the Lord for the patience to overlook their frailties, their peculiarities, their failings, their eccentricities, their shortcomings. I believe God's people here are patient. We come from many different backgrounds, but we find God's people loving one another, and according to the list in 1 Corinthians 13, patience is the first attribute of love.

### **#3 Be patient with God**

*Submit yourself to God's loving providence*

*"Wait patiently for the Lord..." (Psalm 14)*

What do I mean? Be patient with God's plans for your life, submit yourself to God's sovereign and loving purposes. It could be something God allowed in your life in the past - even the distant past - which continues to cast a shadow over you today. It could be an unresolved family problem that grumbles on and on and on. It could be a relationship issue that never goes away. I heard of a man whose neighbour just stopped talking to him for some petty issue many years ago, and hasn't spoken to him since, and every time he sees him, he gets a blank stare! It could be a problem at work, a thorn in the flesh, a weakness of mind or body. It could be a gift that has never yet been used or a ministry that has never borne fruit, a prayer that has not yet been answered or a good desire that God has not yet been fulfilled, *"delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desire of your heart."* (Psalm 37:4)

And perhaps in one of these things we are displeased with the Lord, we are not happy with what he has allowed in our lives. How can we learn patience with providence?

For a start we must remember that God's timing is different from ours. Almost always his time-frame is a lot longer than ours. *"With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day."* (2 Peter 3:8) You and I want that prayer answered tomorrow or preferably today, but what if God's plans may have it answered next month or next year?

After worship last Sunday morning, when preaching at the Asian Christian Fellowship in Wolverhampton, a man came up to me, eager to tell me some news. "My wife became a Christian this week." He was so excited. How many years had he prayed for her? For 20 years! God's timings are not our timings!

Then we must remember that God's timings are best, *"As for God, his way is perfect"* (Psalm 18:30). God's times are not our times because he's working out much bigger better plans for us and for his glory! Perhaps before his wife was converted, God had important work to do in my Indian friend's heart and life. We can't know the Lord's plans, but they are perfect!

So if his timing and plans are perfect, we should trust him completely and wait for him patiently, *"Be*

*still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:70), “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.” (Psalm 27:14)*

And even if God’s strange providences are never resolved in this short and passing life, we know they’ll be resolved in the next, for *“our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor 4:17-18)*

William Cowper lived in the 1700s and wrote poems and hymns. But he suffered serious depression much of his adult life. Was it because he was bullied when he was young? Who can tell? He wrote our closing hymn which reminds us not to make hasty judgements about what God is doing through trials, but to trust him.

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm*

*Deep in unsearchable mines  
Of never failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sovereign will*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense  
But trust Him for His grace  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face*

*His purposes will ripen fast  
Unfolding every hour  
The bud may have a bitter taste  
But sweet will be the flower*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain  
God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain*