
Four of Nine – LONGSUFFERING/PATIENCE

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, gentleness, goodness, faith

If you will notice I used the word longsuffering and not patience. The Greek word for longsuffering is "MAKROTHUMIA and it is defined in Strong's by two Greek words, makrothumia and hupomone. Makrothumia is the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint.

The Greek word "HUPOMONE," which was translated "patience" in 2Ti 3:10, was translated "patience" a total of twenty-nine times in the King James Version. It was translated as "enduring" once (2Co 1:6), as "patient continuance" once (Ro 2:7), and as "patient waiting" once (2Th 3:5). The New International Version translated it as "endurance" in 2 Ti 3:10

The difference between "patience" and "longsuffering" is slight but must exist since Paul used these two different words in the same list in the same verse. The American Heritage Dictionary defines "**longsuffering**" as "patiently enduring wrongs or difficulties." **Patience** is "the capacity, quality, or fact of being patient". The definition of "patient" is (1) Bearing or enduring pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance with calmness (2) Marked by or exhibiting calm endurance (3) Tolerant; understanding. (4) Persevering; constant". (American Heritage Dictionary)

The words "patient" and "patience" can be used in a context where no pain or suffering is involved. The word "longsuffering" cannot be used that way. The inclusion of the word "suffering" in the word "longsuffering" suggests the difference between just "patience" and "longsuffering." As I said the difference between "patience" and "longsuffering" is slight but must exist.

Patience....

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard somebody say to me or have heard it preached from the pulpits in churches across the land "don't pray for patience, brother, unless you want tribulation, because you know the Bible says, 'tribulation worketh patience' and God will make your prayer come to pass", indicating that God is the one who brings tribulations in order to bring some type of lesson or positive result to perfect his children.

So many things can be said about a statement like that. There is a saying here where we live in Lima, Peru... 'there are two kinds of people, "*Peruvians and Taxi Drivers*". If you have ever been here you know that patience is non-existent when it comes to driving. So if that statement were true as presented then drivers here would be so patient no one would ever hear a horn beep. That's a nice thought!

So what does the scripture really say and what does it mean? Well, the scripture is Rom. 5:3 and it says... 'And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience....

What is the context here? (Remember we must read the Bible in context and get the complete picture.) Jesus was a master teacher and when He spoke each word was like a stroke of the brush on the canvas of a painter... the picture was not complete until the last stroke. Likewise as the scriptures are brought forth they paint a picture and we have to read it complete and in context to get the whole meaning.

Paul had just been expressing the joy and expectation of the coming of Jesus and the glory that would be revealed at his second coming. It is easy to have a shouting good time when we are talking about heaven and the goodness of God, but Paul was saying he also had the same rejoicing and joy in his heart in the middle of tribulation. Now that is when most don't rejoice and the reason is they, unlike Paul, do not understand that the reason he could rejoice was because of the direct result of being freely justified by faith and knowing that God loved him.

When we, as believers in Christ, understand that God loves us, not because of our performance or good works but because of our faith in Him, then we too can rejoice in the good times and the bad times. Why? Because our faith remains steady and unshakable. But people who trust in 'if they have been doing everything right' based on their performance of all the rules (howbeit of their own making or that of some religious group) when times of trouble come they will feel defeated, that they are only getting what they deserve, that they have to get 'right' and clean up their act before they can expect any help from God. Sadly their attention is all on what they can do themselves instead of what Jesus has already done.

So how could Paul rejoice in tribulation and how can we? By understanding how much and how great and 'over the top' God's love for us really is.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:6-8)

If God loved us so much when we were ungodly, not His child and were in fact enemies of the faith, if He loved us so much that He sent His son to die for us and take our place and complete such a great plan of redemption for whosoever will, then how much more does He love us now that we are His own children. And that is how Paul could rejoice and that is how we can rejoice in the middle of tribulation.

So why do troubles come? Well it is not because God creates them but because there is an ongoing battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. But when we operate in faith it gives God the access to grant us the victory.

One man said it this way, *“If problems were what perfected us, then most Christians would have been perfected long ago and those who experience the greatest problems would be the greatest Christians.”*

So then, where do we get patience or longsuffering and how is it perfected in us? Let’s look at the instruction manual and see. (So many times we throw away the instruction manual and just try to figure it out for ourselves.) But always know that we as believers have an open book to get all the answers from.

In Romans 15:4 it says that patience comes through the scriptures.

‘For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through **patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.’**

I found a good definition for patience in the book, “Living in the Balance of Grace and Faith” by Andrew Wommack. ‘Patience is simply faith applied over a prolonged period of time. Instead of a momentary faith, patience is prolonged, enduring faith. Patience is when you just believe and keep believing.’

Now look at Rom. 10:17 (we faith people have this one almost tattooed on our forehead), “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’ So then as surely as patience comes through the Word of God, so does faith and you know what? They are both fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is...longsuffering [patience) ...faith. Galatians 5:22

As we have said in the previous messages the fruit of faith, joy, peace, (all nine of the fruits) are in the believer producing all the time. Our spirit always has these attributes even when we don’t feel like it. They are being produced regardless of how we feel in our emotions. When we are joined to the Lord we are one with Him, as the scripture teaches us in I Cor.6:17, and that is why we also produce this fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is constant and does not come and go, it is not on and off. So patience is constantly flowing through the child of God but like peace or joy we must let it have its perfect work. The word for worketh translated from the Greek according to Strong’s concordance is *kat-er-gad'-zom-ahee* (from G2596 and G2038).. to work fully, that is, accomplish; by implication to finish, fashion: - cause, do (deed), perform, work (out). Patience does not come through hardship. If it did as some wrongly teach, then people who have had the most suffering would be

the most godly, most holy and most patient people in the world. We, as believers, already have the fruit of the Spirit in us and we have patience through the Word of God but it has to be *used* before it reaches its full power or strength.

In Ecclesiastes 4:12 it says ‘and a threefold cord is not quickly broken’. Patience is intertwined with faith and hope. We simply can’t have one without the others. So those who try to say they are just patiently waiting on God and have lost all hope are deceived. By the same token, those who don’t believe God are not operating in patience. Heb. 11:1 teaches the process, first hope (based on the promises of God) then faith (which gives the substance to the things hoped for) and then patience gets involved for the thing to be manifested.

Remember problems are not given to us by God to make us better and to perfect patience in us or to give us patience. Why is this so important to understand? Because if our problems are from God to help us then we will embrace them and attribute evil to God and Satan our enemy will use that thinking to destroy us. Patience is faith sustained over a long period of time. Patience is not just passively or lazily waiting on God to do something, but patience is actively believing and looking for the completion of God's promise against all odds, no matter how long it takes. This is the kind of faith that will make us perfect and complete, not wanting for any good thing (Jas 1:4).

Blessings!! And remember...look to your future and not to the past, learn to live in the grace of God and love much, forgive always and hold no bitterness toward anyone.