

FRUIT NO. 4: PATIENCE (Genesis 37, 39-50)

2.10.19

INTRODUCTION

A survey done by a financial services company back in 2015 found the following: While 80% of respondents consider themselves patient —

Over 50% of Americans admit to honking after the traffic lights turn green

72% of Gen Y (born 1980-1994, “millennials”) will push an already-lit elevator button

96% of Americans will knowingly consume extremely hot food or drink that burns their mouths; 63% will do so frequently

More than 50% will hang up the phone after being on hold for one minute or less

71% frequently exceed the posted speed limit to get to their destination faster

Gen Y (millennials) check their phones an average of eight times when waiting to hear back from someone they’ve dated

When waiting for a table at a restaurant, nearly 25% of respondents ages 18-24 wait less than one minute before approaching the host again after the wait period has passed.

It shouldn’t be a big surprise that we have become more and more impatient as a culture.

Consider some of these things:

We have “instant” foods

We have microwaves that greatly reduce cooking time

We have online bill paying and banking

We can buy virtually anything online (no shopping trips)

With that, we can buy groceries online (either home-delivered or ready to pick up)

We can take a photo of a check to deposit it (even quicker than going online)

One of the reasons given for the reduced popularity of baseball is its slow pace

Even for us church people, we have online Bibles (quicker to look things up)

E-mail (no wonder the old way is now called “snail mail”)

Computers save time for all kinds of things — don’t have to write “longhand” anymore

We even have drive-through wakes at funeral homes

And ever since I was a little kid — all the products that were “time-savers”

So, maybe somewhat ironically, our “fruit of the Spirit” focus today is on patience.

Difficult subject; we going to look at patience in three (3) forms:

Patience/impatience between man and God

Patience shown by God/Christ to man (i.e., Jesus and His disciples)

Patience shown from man to man

STORY OF JOSEPH: MAN’S PATIENCE WITH GOD

How Joseph showed his patience with God (waiting on God instead of complaining to Him):

Chapter 37: Unjustly sold into slavery to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard

Chapter 39: Joseph becomes Potiphar’s attendant: *The Lord was with Joseph — Genesis 39:2a* in charge of everything in his household. Potiphar’s wife attempts to seduce him but Joseph refuses her advances: *“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” — Genesis 39:9b.* She tries again, he runs from the house, and she falsely accuses him of sexual

assault. Potiphar unjustly throws Joseph in prison — where once again he is placed in full charge of everything: *the Lord was with him* — **Genesis 39:21a**.

Chapter 40: The dreams of the king's cupbearer and baker: ***“Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams”*** — **Genesis 40:8b**. Joseph's God-aided interpretations come true, but the king's cupbearer forgets about him for two whole years, keeping Joseph in prison.

Chapter 41: Pharaoh's dreams: The cupbearer finally remembers Joseph, and he is brought before Pharaoh. ***Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” Joseph replied, “I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires”*** — **Genesis 41:15-16**. Joseph placed in charge of Egypt.

Chapter 50: The brothers' concern that Joseph would bear a grudge: ***“What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?”*** — **Genesis 50:15b**. But Joseph understood God's plan: ***“Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*** . . . ***And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them*** — **Genesis 50:19-20, 21b**.

MAN'S IMPATIENCE WITH GOD

How the Israelites showed impatience with God's providing for them in the wilderness: Within three days of the miracle of the Red Sea, they are complaining about the lack of water. Shortly after that they complained about a lack of food: ***“If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you (Moses) have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death”*** — **Exodus 16:3**. These people had ALL seen the deliverance from Egypt — all the plagues and culminating with the miracle of the Red Sea. But they had no patience the moment things were unknown or unsure.

Impatience with God keeping Moses on Mount Sinai: They gave up on God's leadership through Moses and told Aaron (Moses' brother): ***“Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him”*** — **Exodus 32:1b**.

Impatience with God and Moses in the wilderness: ***“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food”*** — **Numbers 21:5**. As a result, God sent poisonous snakes among the people; many were bitten and died.

Impatience of King Saul towards God's commands: Saul was waiting at Gilgal for the prophet Samuel to come and offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to God (I Samuel 10:8). When Samuel did not seem to be coming, Saul impulsively went ahead and offered up the burnt offerings — something only a priest in Israel could do; Samuel had that God-ordained right, not Saul. As a result of this impatient disobedience, Saul lost his right to rule the kingdom; David would now be God's anointed ruler.

GOD'S (JESUS') PATIENCE WITH MAN

Jesus clearly equated Himself as God, yet He showed an amazing amount of gracious patience when dealing with His disciples. Some examples of His patience (just from the book of Matthew):

Matthew 8: Jesus calms the storm: *The disciples went and woke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” — Matthew 8:25-26a.*

Matthew 14: Peter walking on the water alongside Jesus: *But when [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” — Matthew 14:30-31.*

Matthew 16: Jesus warns the disciples about the “yeast” (the teachings) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples think that Jesus is fussing at them because they forgot to bring bread: *Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many basketfuls you gathered?” — Matthew 16:8-10.*

Matthew 16: Jesus begins explaining to His disciples about His going to Jerusalem to die, but how He will also be raised back to life on the third day, but Peter fusses at Him, saying that this will never happen to Him: *Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns” — Matthew 16:23.*

Matthew 17: Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy after the disciples failed. When asked why they couldn’t do it, Jesus said: *“Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” — Matthew 17:20.*

Matthew 20: When the mother of James and John asked Jesus that her sons might be able to sit on either side of Christ in His kingdom, the other disciples were angry and jealous. Jesus’ response: *“[W]hoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 20:26-27.*

In addition to these examples, in the gospel of Mark, we have an angel’s words of comfort at the empty tomb concerning Peter who, along with Judas, had effectively betrayed Jesus: *“You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you’” — Mark 16:6b-7.*

In Luke, we have Jesus repeating that idea when the disciples again break out into an argument about who is the greatest, this one taking place during the Last Supper (like Jesus didn’t have anything else on His mind): *“[T]he greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” — Jesus Christ, Luke 22:26.*

And from John’s gospel we have Jesus confronting the “doubting” disciple Thomas, who had not been with the disciples when Jesus had made His initial appearance to them. The next time Christ appeared; Thomas was there. He said to Thomas: *“Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it in My side. Stop doubting and believe” — Jesus Christ, John 20:27.* And of course this brought out Thomas’ wonderful conclusion spoken to his gracious and loving Master: *“My Lord and my God!” — Thomas, John 20:28b.*

Beyond that, we have God’s amazing patience with everyone outside His kingdom:

[D]o you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness intended to lead you to repentance? — Paul, Romans 2:4.

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. . . . Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation — II Peter 3:9, 15a.

APPLICATION

Patience: In the Greek, the capacity to remain self-controlled despite difficult circumstances or actions by others that might be expected to cause anger or upset.

Patience: Waiting without complaint.

Patience: Slowness in avenging wrongs. It is the quality of restraint that prevents believers from speaking or acting hastily in the face of disagreement, opposition, or persecution. Patience is bearing pain or problems without complaining.

Patience: A God-exercised or God-given restraint in face of opposition or oppression. It is not passivity. The initiative lies with God's love, or the Christian's, in meeting wrong in this way. It has also been defined as a "long holding out of the mind before it gives room to anger.

Dan's definition: Meeting people where they are.

Why is patience so difficult?

We only have one viewpoint — our own. To be patient requires us to, as the Native American proverb says, "not judge a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." Two verses from Paul's letter to the Romans give us an indication of what our attitude one to another should be:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves — Paul, Romans 15:1. The Greek for "bear with" is BASTAZO, which signifies "to support as a burden," and refers to "sufferings borne on behalf of others." We are not to see ourselves as special or superior as we mature in Christ. Rather, we are to see ourselves as more and more able to bear with those who may not be as mature as we are. Paul is literally asking us to carry one another, the strong carrying the weak. What is key to that? A couple of our "one-another's":

Honor one another above yourselves — Paul, Romans 12:10.

In humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others — Paul, Philippians 2:3b-4.

And did you hear what Paul said? "Bear with the failings of the weak." At different points in time, we are ALL going to fail. Failings are going to happen. As long as human beings make up the church, fails are going to be a part of the landscape. So, this next verse becomes HUGE:

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God — Paul, Romans 15:7. The Greek for accept in this case is PROSLAMBANO, signifying a special interest on the part of the receiver, literally suggesting "a welcome." Christ is, of course, the great example: Despite the fact that our sins nailed Him to the cross, He nevertheless welcomes us — sins included — into surrender and fellowship with Him. So, with that example, how can we be patient with each other?

KEYS TO BEING PATIENT

First, how we treat each other IS NOT EARNED. We meet each other where each other is at. Accepting each other as God through Christ has accepted us is SQUARE ONE. No one has to earn our love, our honor, our forgiveness, our service, our trust, etc. We START there! Remember the prodigal son? His father was certainly the one who was the injured party. But what happened? Upon the son's return, full relationship was restored — immediately. No waiting period, no “needing to earn it.”

Never forget how God sees us. He met us and loved us where we were — DESPITE how we were. If that is Christ's model, how can we react in any other way?

Along with how God sees us, He see every one of us equally — sinners saved by His grace, His undeserved favor. We are ALL His kids.

For leaders, for anyone with responsibility here: Being a leader is not an entitlement. None of us in any position of leadership are any more special in God's eyes than anybody not in leadership. We are all God's kids, living and serving in God's house. This place is not ours; it never has been and never will be. It belongs to Him. All leadership means is a special, gracious God-given opportunity to “honor one another above ourselves,” to “value one another above ourselves,” to “serve one another in love.” Humility, service, ministry — all those things are what a call to leadership means. Patience is one of the filters through which all leadership must be practiced.

Like love, joy and peace, patience is a fruit of the Spirit, a result of the Holy Spirit's activity in our lives. As such, it is a great and very transparent barometer of who owns our lives — whether we are living in our own strength or being grown in our Master's strength. It should be NATURALLY occurring.

TIPS FOR BEING PATIENT

Be devoted to the Word. The Bible is our perpetual owner's manual — meaning that it should be consulted all the time about how to live, and on how to respond in different situations with which we are faced. The life is not about living in our own strength. The life is about realizing we can't do anything in our own strength and thus seeking God through His Holy Spirit to live through us. So many Christians confine their Word time to a brief morning devotional. Sometimes it's even less than that; I remember talking to several people who have told me that their pastor's message WAS their time in the Word. That is not how the Word is to be used. When do we consult owner's manuals? When learning to see how something works, and to see how to remedy something that went wrong. That's what the Bible is for. What did Paul advise Timothy? *[T]he Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work — Paul, II Timothy 3:15b-17.* That “teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” is not only for us to apply to others. It starts with the Word doing that to us — as we study it in our own lives in Christ. If we're not using the owner's manual, why should we expect anybody else to? In fact, that was the apostle Peter's fondest wish for his readers, as he closed his second letter with: *[G]row in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — II Peter 3:18a.*

Pray. Get in the habit of praying in the midst of moments — in real time, right when things are happening. For instance, God has gotten me into the habit, whenever somebody wants to talk to

me, of praying for His wisdom, right in that moment, even while I am listening. That comes from the experience of knowing that, on my own, I couldn't figure my way out of a paper bag. If somebody is being difficult, if someone is angry, if somebody's just not "getting it," pray, right in that moment, for the patience to endure, for the patience to not respond in kind, for the patience to come alongside that person — "let's walk through this together." The idea is ministry: How do I show Jesus in this moment? How do I meet this person's needs in this moment? How do I serve this person, how do I honor this person, how do I love this person as Jesus loves them, in this moment? Those answers ain't coming in our own strength. To be patient requires us to be filled with the life and strength of the Holy Spirit in each and every moment with which we are confronted. Patience requires prayer.

Be OK with being helpless — for two (2) reasons:

First, when Christ said, "*[A]part from Me you can do nothing*" — *Jesus Christ, John 15:5b*, He meant it. Nobody in here is the exception to that rule. We need to lose the idea that we have to depend on our own self-sufficiency. Life in Christ is not about self-sufficiency. It is realizing, and living, the foundation of Christianity: "I can't." But that is also supposed to be our foundation for celebration. Remember the words that Christ shared with Paul: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness*" — *Jesus Christ, II Corinthians 12:9a*. That was a game-changer for Paul because, instead of wondering why Christ wasn't bringing relief, he realized what he was being given: the power of Jesus Christ to cope with his situation. I'm thinking he came out ahead in that transaction. Paul thought so too: He celebrated with these words: *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong* — *Paul, II Corinthians 12:9b-10*.

Second, with all the fruit we've been looking at, and with all of the fruit still to come, we need to remember that it's not called the "fruit of the Spirit" for nothing. It is an outcome of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives — not our work in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Why is the fruit of the Spirit so important? It reflects a life rooted in something else other than how this world operates — and in something so different that it can actually be a means by which somebody can be directed to the life of Jesus Christ. Being ruled by the Spirit makes Christianity real because it carries the message, "Oh, this is what Christianity looks like." And even more: "This is what Jesus looks like." And that's exactly how we want people to be impacted by our lives — that in seeing us they see the Messiah behind us.

Patience is so important because the world sees so very little of it.