

# Patience: Persevering In the Delays And Trials Of Life

Galatians 5:22; James 5:11

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Perhaps there are not greater sources of sinful frustration in our lives than the delays and hindrances God places in our paths. Oh, how we so often despise the word “wait”. But dear ones, patience is a fruit of the Spirit that involves our waiting—waiting upon the Lord for an answer to prayer for a particular need—waiting for the Lord to remove a trial, a hardship, or an affliction—waiting for the Lord to change the heart of one who resists walking in the path of righteousness and truth. Waiting patiently means that you must take your eyes off of your watches and your calendars, and rather cast yourselves before the Lord, your almighty, all-wise, and all-loving Savior, and submit yourselves to His schedule, His plan, and His timetable. For, dear ones, He is never even a second late in all that He has purposed for you as His dear child. Your duty is to call upon the name of the Lord for the needs you have—His sovereign purpose is to come at the exact, precise time that will most glorify Him and most benefit you (even when you must wait and wait and wait). Remember, our delays are God’s appointments. That is why we so much need the fruit of patience growing in our lives.

The main points for the sermon this Lord’s Day are: (1) The Meaning of Patience (James 5:11); and (2) The Application of Patience (James 5:11).

## I. The Meaning of Patience (James 5:11).

A. We considered in a previous sermon the fruit of longsuffering (*macrothumia*, as listed in Galatians 5:22), but a closely related though distinct word (not specifically listed in Galatians 5:22) is that of patience (*hupomone*). Both of these Greek words are used in James 5:10-11

(*macrothumia* is translated “patience” in James 5:10, and *hupomone* is translated “patience” in James 5:11).

B. The Greek word translated “patience” in James 5:11 is a compound word: *hupo* (which means “under”) and *mone* (which means an “abiding” or “dwelling”); thus patience is literally an abiding or dwelling under—under trials, hardships, afflictions, or delays. Patience is not freaking out, stressing out, or running to and fro without divine direction from the Word. Patience flows from the grace and fruit of peace (the previous fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22) in resting in the Lord and His sovereign, wise, and loving plan for your life in whatever you face, and submitting yourself in faith, love, and obedience to abide under that trial in waiting for the Lord to bring His deliverance in His appointed time (Psalm 91:1-2).

C. In order to better understand the word “patience” (*hupomone*) as used in James 5:11, let me briefly contrast it with the word “longsuffering” that is used in James 5:10 (*macrothumia*) and in Galatians 5:22. Although these two words are similar (and at times even used together in the same verse or context—Colossians 1:11; 2 Timothy 3:10), yet these two words have different nuances.

1. Whereas *longsuffering* does not retaliate in anger under trial, *patience* does not give up under trial.

2. Whereas longsuffering is a restraining fruit (vengeful anger is restrained), patience is a persevering fruit (it endures and will not surrender under the pressure of extreme trial).

3. Whereas the opposite of longsuffering is vengeful anger, the opposite of patience is fainting or surrendering due to weariness or hopelessness.

4. Whereas longsuffering has in view a holding back the floodgates of bitterness and the passion to get even and looks to the

mercy of God (James 1:19), patience has in view a waiting upon the Lord in perseverance (“How long, O Lord”) until that dark cloud of trial passes and the Sun of righteousness shines upon us and looks in hope to God (Romans 8:24-25—“In hope were we saved”).

D. The meaning of biblical patience must of course be defined by the God of patience (Romans 15:5).

1. The divine attribute of patience in God is exhibited in God’s accomplishing His everlasting purposes in history, regardless of the opposition, hatred, and hostility of Satan, demonic forces, or man. The Lord is not in any hurry or in a rush to see His eternal plan fulfilled. Though God hates the sin and evil in this world, He is not getting worried or all stressed out that the wickedness of man may thwart His everlasting purposes. He could immediately judge and remove all His enemies if He chose to do so. He is governing and using even the wickedness of man for His own holy purposes (Acts 4:27-28). All His promises to defeat His enemies and to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus will be realized (Acts 15:18).

2. Dear ones, life and this world do not revolve around us or our schedule as to when God must work. It all revolves around God’s schedule and timetable that He has set for His own glory and even for our own good as we wait patiently in hope upon Him. Dear ones, our hope in the Lord is revealed by our willingness to patiently wait upon Him. Abraham tried to hurry the Lord up by way of having a child (Ishmael) through unlawful means (through Hagar, a concubine), rather than through lawful means (through Sarah his wife, who was humanly speaking unable to have children). But after waiting 25 years, God gave to Abraham the son of promise (Isaac—through whom Christ would come).

E. Before moving from the Meaning of Patience to consider the Application of Patience, let us consider what biblical patience is not.

1. Biblical patience is not being patient in sin/error or tolerating sin/error in our lives as if we can do nothing about the sin/error in our lives, nor is biblical patience making excuses about the sin/error in our lives and procrastinating about taking serious steps to remove this sin/error from our lives. Biblical patience is not being comfortable and cozy with sin/error as if being saved by grace meant we need not take any solemn course of action to put to death the lusts of the flesh (Romans 6:1-2; Matthew 5:27-30; Galatians 5:16).

2. Biblical patience is not a hopeless resignation (*Que sera, sera*—whatever will be, will be) that since we cannot change people or circumstances, we must simply be carried along with the strong, raging current in the mighty river of events that overflow us. Biblical patience yet swims against the current in standing for the truth and righteousness of Christ even when the world and all its worldly fads, lusts, immodesty, entertainment, and hostility to Christ stand against us. Biblical patience is persevering in hope (not lying down and playing dead). At the present time we may be called to wait for God's deliverance as we endure the attacks and blows of the enemy, but we do so in hope and with a confident expectation that we will be delivered at the Lord's appointed time—now or later (Hebrews 10:36).

3. Biblical patience does not mean that one (within a home, church, or nation) who suffers persecution, the threat of harm, or having to partake of idolatry or wickedness cannot flee (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 10:23; 1 Corinthians 10:14).

4. Biblical patience does not mean that a lawful covenant that has been flagrantly violated must necessarily be continued (whether a business contract, or a marital covenant, or a treaty with another nation—there are lawful grounds for divorce in Scripture, adultery and desertion that cannot be remedied, Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15).

## **II. The Application of Patience (James 5:11).**

A. As James begins verse 11, he states that which is recognized to be true not only by him, but also recognized to be true by those scattered Jewish Christians to whom he writes: “Behold, we count them happy which endure”, or more accurately, “Behold, we consider them blessed who are patiently enduring” (from the same root word used in the Beatitudes for “Blessed”). Here the verbal form is used for patient endurance, whereas in the next portion of the text the noun form is used for “the patience of Job”. Why are those who patiently endure blessed?

1. Because by patiently enduring tribulation they will build character that is tried and proven (Romans 5:3-4).
2. Because by patiently enduring trials they will grow in hope (Romans 15:4).
3. Because by patiently enduring hardships and afflictions they will inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12).
4. Dear ones, do you not know in your heart how you admire those in history and those who you know or read about who patiently endure and persevere through the most difficult and trying of circumstances, rather than those who wallow in self-pity, feeling ever so sorry for themselves, and rather give up in the face of great trial? We esteem those Christians blessed who are willing to suffer the loss of all things and to patiently endure the most vicious attacks that are brought against them without forsaking or compromising the least truth revealed by Christ.

B. James next gives an explicit illustration and example of patience, namely, Job (“Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord”).

1. The fact that Job is introduced here as a historical example of patience demonstrates that Job was not a fictional or mythical person used in poetic literature or in a parable, but was a very real biblical patriarch who likely lived before the time of Moses. Job is mentioned

along with other historical and biblical characters as well (Ezekiel 14:14,20—where it speaks of the righteousness of Noah, Daniel, and Job). Skeptics will always seek to find ways to undermine the historicity of the biblical accounts and thereby undermine the authority of Scripture. But clearly James here addresses Job as a historical forefather who manifested patience in the face of extreme trial and hardship. Job is thus presented to us as an example of patience because he was a man like each of us. He was not sinless, but was subject to the same kinds of temptations to which each of us is subjected.

2. Let us rehearse briefly the extreme trials of Job and his perseverance through them.

a. The trials of Job were not for some unrepentant sin in his life, but were rather due to an unseen challenge offered by Satan to God (Job 1:9-11). This was a battle in the unseen world to prove that God's grace of patience will cause His people to persevere in faith through the most difficult and anguishing trials (even death of children).

b. The Lord sovereignly grants Satan permission to bring the most severe hardships upon Job, except he cannot touch his body (Job 1:12). Satan attacked and destroyed all of Job's wealth which was substantial, and killed all his children. What was Job's response (Job 1:20-22)?

c. The Lord then sovereignly grants permission to Satan to bring upon Job whatever bodily affliction he wickedly desired, short of taking Job's life (Job 2:4-6). Satan brought the most painful boils and sores over Job's whole body (Job 2:7). What was Job's response (Job 2:9-10)?

d. His "friends" of misery then accused him of having committed some grave and serious sin for which he is suffering God's punishment, which he denies.

e. Although Job under such severe trial simply wanted to die at times, although Job went through periods in which he struggled

with the purpose of God in his loss and suffering, he nevertheless persevered by God's grace and he did not cast away his trust in the Lord, but pleaded for and looked in hope to God's deliverance (Job 19:25-27). Job's faith was severely tested, but he nevertheless persevered and did not give up or surrender. In fact, as James indicates, there was a blessed "end of the Lord" in delivering Job even in this life and graciously rewarding Job for his patient endurance (Job 42:10).

f. Dear ones, the Lord was not taking a nap or on a vacation while Job was being tried in the furnace seven-fold times. Our faithful God was in full control of all the events, only allowing Satan to go as far as He, the sovereign Lord, determined. Our gracious God set the limits and the boundaries, for He never allows us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Your life may seem as though the mercy of God has vanished. Your life may seem as though there is no end to the suffering you endure. But look to the patience of Job and God's persevering grace to sustain Job, for that is why James has given him as an example to us.

C. Dear one, what do you know of trial in comparison to Job? If the Lord supplied patience to Job to persevere under such severe hardship, He will likewise grant to you that persevering patience to you as well in whatever trial, hardship, affliction, temptation, upheaval that you may face (even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death). The Lord is not dangling a carrot in front of your face just to taunt or to tease you with the example of Job. Job was of like passions with you and me (just as Elijah was, James 5:17). If the Lord sustained and caused Job to persevere in patience, can He not do so for you? To think otherwise is to act as if God is a liar, or that He is merely playing games with you by offering Job as an example of patience. We would never have had the example of Job for our great encouragement and comfort had the Lord not taken Job through this severe time of trial (and that may be

just as true of your life as others look on at your trials and hardships).

D. The cry of “how long, O Lord” has been often upon the lips of God’s people in the midst of afflictions, trials, hardships, weaknesses, and persecutions. Listen to such desperate cries of David, a man after God’s own heart:

How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?  
[Psalm 13:1-2]

Because of what we suffer for Christ and endure in this earthly pilgrimage, we have all (no doubt) given expression to such earnest pleas to the Lord: “How long, O Lord?” And it is because of all those heartfelt cries of “How long, O Lord” that we need the fruit of patience ever growing in our lives. Without the fruit of patience, those many pleas of “How long, O Lord” would crush our hearts under the heavy burden of despair and hopelessness in throwing up our hands and giving up. Dear ones, the fruit of patience, as it looks with hope to God’s loving purpose and goal in what we suffer and endure in this life, is alone that which will carry you through when you feel like fainting and which will give you perseverance to finish the marathon (not sprint) that Christ has set before you (Hebrews 12:1-2). For just as the Hebrew Christians at the time of the apostles needed the fruit of patience in their trials and tribulations, so likewise do we:

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. [Hebrews 10:36]

E. Do you become frustrated by a slow car ahead of you? Do you choose one line in the grocery store while watching the line next to you to see if it finishes before you? Do you grow impatient with others because they do not perform as well or learn as quickly as you think they



should? Do you easily grow weary of the sinful weaknesses of others (not the obstinate and flagrant sins of others)? Like a farmer we must patiently work the soil and water it waiting for the harvest. A harvest does not happen overnight. However, if there is no fruit from the seed sown, then we have reason to be very concerned. Do you have a very difficult time relaxing and enjoying your family and the blessings of God because you have become so accustomed to living by the clock all your waking hours? Dear ones, these also may be indications of your need to be growing in this fruit of patience.

F. Sometimes God's delays are due to our own delays, our own procrastination, our own excuses for our sin, and our own unwillingness to walk in communion with Christ, loving obedience, and exercising ourselves to godliness. We cry, "How long, O Lord" will I fall into this sin; He cries back (as it were), "How long, O child of God" will you not show me the reverence, the love, the faithfulness, the obedience which I deserve (and take all serious steps daily to root out this besetting sin)."

G. How do you grow in patience?

1. You must be tried like Job (Romans 5:3).
2. You must look in hope to God's promises to sustain you and to deliver you at His appointed time (Hebrews 6:12).
3. You must look to the infinite bowels of God's mercy (James 5:11: "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy").

H. Literally, the text says, "that the Lord has many bowels." In Scripture the inward seat of affection and compassion were referred to within the bowels (Genesis 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26; Colossians 3:12; 1 John 3:17). Dear ones, the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy toward you. As He was to Job, so He is to all His beloved ones. His fatherly love engages his pity to you. When He afflicts you and tries you, He does so

with infinite pity and mercy, dear child of God. The Lord Jesus sympathizes with you. His heart bled for you in the Garden and on the cross. His heart is moved toward you infinitely more than the heart of a mother is toward her suffering child. He is touched with your infirmities. Therefore, faint not. Cast not away your hope. Come to Christ, for He will deliver you.

You who are within the sound of my voice and are without Christ, you have no blessed hope of joy in heaven awaiting you, but rather a fearful expectation of torment in hell. Listen to me. You can have this blessed hope of heaven by trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as your payment for sin and as your righteousness before God. Trust Him now and His promise of salvation:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

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