

# Patience

**Fruit of the Spirit Series, August 21 & 22 | Hosea 11:1-4**  
**Senior Pastor Rob O'Neal**

## PATIENCE WOULD HELP US ALL RIGHT NOW.

### **Did you hear about the airline passenger who ended up duct-taped to his seat?**

Earlier this month, a passenger on a Frontier Airlines flight got intoxicated. He became violent and assaulted two members of the flight crew.

Crew members tried to de-escalate the situation. However, after he punched one crew member in the face, the crew taped him to his seat.

At first, Frontier Airlines responded by suspending the flight crew pending an investigation. However, after objections from the public, the airline supported the crew.<sup>1</sup>

This summer as travelers have gone back to the air, tensions have been high. There have been numerous unruly passengers, and multiple crews have been forced to take action to protect their passengers. I get it, and I support flight crews maintaining order and safety on flights.

However, I was on a flight recently, and one flight attendant had a look in her eyes that said, "Go ahead. Give me a reason to tape you to the seat. I WANT to tape you to the seat!"

### **With many people feeling tense like that, this is a great time to be studying the Fruit of the Spirit.**

The Fruit of the Spirit is godly character produced in Christians by God the Holy Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit is one fruit with many different aspects or facets.

**Galatians 5:22-23** reads, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

We would like for the Holy Spirit to produce a bumper crop of godly character in our lives.

However, as we've seen on airplanes this year, many of us struggle to show godly character.

### **This week we're talking about my least favorite aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit: patience.**

Patience has negative connotations to me. When I hear the word "patience," I think of putting up with stuff because I can't do anything about it.

However, patience keeps surprising me with more layers and implications.

In *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, Christopher Wright defines patience this way:

Patience is "the ability to put up with the weaknesses and foibles of others ... without getting quickly irritated or angry enough to want to fight back."

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/03/business/max-berry-frontier-airlines-flight-attendant-assault.html>

Furthermore, he adds that patience is “the ability to endure for a long time whatever opposition and suffering may come our way ... without wanting retaliation or revenge.”<sup>2</sup>

Described that way, it’s easy to see patience as a critical aspect of godly character.

### **True patience would go a long way to helping us all right now.**

The past year has tried our patience in every way.

Here, nearly a year and a half into the pandemic, our ability to put up with the weaknesses and foibles of others has been pushed to the limit.

Furthermore, our ability to endure opposition and frustration (if not suffering) has been tested.

All that testing has left us irritated, easily angered, and ready to retaliate.

So, let’s look to the Bible today for patience. We need patience.

## **PATIENCE IS PART OF GOD’S CHARACTER.**

### **The LORD reveals his name and his character in Exodus 34:6-7.**

After a particularly disappointing chapter in Israel’s history, the leader, Moses, asked God to reveal his glory.

Then the LORD passed by Moses and proclaimed his name as he went.

What the LORD said in proclaiming his full name tells us a great deal about his character.

**Exodus 34:6-7** reads, *The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*

The LORD’s full name tells us that patience is part of God’s own character.

### **The LORD is “slow to anger.”**

The LORD says that he is merciful and gracious. Mercy and grace go with being slow to anger.

Then in verse seven, he expands on what it means to be merciful, gracious, and slow to anger. He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. God is quick to forgive, so he is slow to anger.

### **The LORD is also “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”**

The word “steadfast love” implies that God reliably gives good things to his people. Furthermore, it means that God has a covenant with us and reliably keeps that covenant.

The word “faithfulness” means that God is always honest and true to his word.

Why is that so important, and what does it have to do with patience?

Simply put, God’s steadfast love and faithfulness are important, because God keeps his promises and is good to us even when we don’t make it easy!

---

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, p. 69.

## **The LORD shows us what true patience looks like.**

To get to a more precise understanding of patience, we are going to turn to two archaic words rarely used in English anymore. However, these two words capture the essence of patience.

First, the LORD shows us that patience involves forbearance. Forbearance means patiently restraining our anger or the consequences our anger could bring.

Second, the LORD shows us that patience involves longsuffering. Longsuffering means patiently enduring suffering or hardship without complaining and retaliating.

Let's look more closely now at the two sides of patience. When we understand these two concepts, we will understand patience better, we'll understand God's character better, and we'll understand the character that God is shaping inside of those of us who follow Jesus.

## **PATIENCE INVOLVES FORBEARANCE.**

### **Forbearance is restraining our anger and anger's consequences.**

We all experience anger.

Anger is a response to an emotion we feel like disappointment, frustration, or hurt.

Specifically, anger is a response that produces energy designed to produce change. In God's design, anger should create the energy that produces positive, godly change.

However, anger can easily be misdirected. Instead of being directed to produce positive change, anger can be turned loose and do great damage.

Forbearance is when we restrain our anger or restrain the consequences that someone else could or even should face because of what they have done that led to our anger.

### **We see the LORD's forbearance in Hosea 11:1-4.**

*When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.*

*The more they were called,  
the more they went away;  
they kept sacrificing to the Baals  
and burning offerings to idols.*

*Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;  
I took them up by their arms,  
but they did not know that I healed them.  
I led them with cords of kindness,  
with the bands of love,  
and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,  
and I bent down to them and fed them.*

### **The passage reminds us that the LORD had already shown great forbearance.**

Hosea prophesied in the Kingdom of Israel in the days when the Assyrian Empire was taking over that part of the world in the latter half of the 700s BC.

The LORD called Israel out of slavery in Egypt into a covenant relationship with him. Even better, the LORD treated Israel like a favorite son.

The people of Israel, however, rebelled against their covenant with God and were faithless. Instead, they chased after false gods and were cruel to their own people. That's the charge from God in the book of Hosea. God had every right to be angry and to pour out the consequences of his anger on his people.

Instead of punishing his people as he had every right to do, the LORD treated them like a young child learning how to walk. The LORD healed them. He even provided for them like a person with an animal that needed to be cared for and fed. That's forbearing patience.

### **While the LORD's forbearance has limits, forbearance is God's nature.**

Immediately after Hosea 11:4, we discover that God's patience with his people has hit its limit. They will face some of the consequences of their actions. **Hosea 11:6** speaks clearly about these consequences:

*The sword shall rage against their cities,  
consume the bars of their gates,  
and devour them because of their own counsels.*

However, don't forget that forbearing patience is in God's nature. In **Hosea 14:4** the LORD envisions a time when he will ultimately redeem them, restore them, and bring his people back to himself:

*I will heal their apostasy;  
I will love them freely,  
for my anger has turned from them.*

Forbearing patience is God's nature.

### **What we do with our anger reveals the degree to which we have patience.**

We all experience anger. Anger is a response hard-wired into us when we see injustice and unrighteousness. Anger is part of God's character coming out in us. It has uses.

However, many times our anger has nothing to do with injustice or unrighteousness.

And frequently our anger does damage instead of seeking to make right and restore.

What do you do with your anger? When do you give full vent to your anger?

Expressing our anger and the power of our anger demonstrates that we have a long way to go in getting patience.

### **Patience means controlling our anger.**

Forbearance disrupts the sinful way anger turns quickly into destructive energy.

The Spirit of God helps us to see others through the eyes of God and circumstances through the lens of the mission of Jesus.

Love (of all kinds) channels the energy of anger in more productive directions.

Patience involves forbearance.

## **PATIENCE INVOLVES LONGSUFFERING.**

### **Longsuffering simply means our ability to endure suffering or hardship.**

Suffering and hardship are part of life.

When they come our way, what do we do with them?

Obviously, we tend to give up, quit, or give in.

Worse, we sometimes lash out at others when we suffer or run into hardship.

The longsuffering side of patience means we bear up under pressure, refusing to lose hope and refusing to take our frustration out on others.

**James 5:7-11 lays out three different examples of patience as longsuffering.**

*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

**Let's look at those examples one at a time.**

First, we have the example of the farmer. The farmer needs the rains to plant the crops, to grow the crops, and to harvest the crops. Since Palestine was an arid climate without access to rivers and freshwater lakes, the farmers there were entirely dependent on the rain. Hence, the farmer patiently yet eagerly waits for the rain and is longsuffering about the process.

Second, the prophets encountered great suffering at times. At times they suffered knowing that their people were going to suffer. Sometimes they were caught up in the calamities they prophesied. Other times, they were actively persecuted by the people or authorities in their own day. The prophets refused to allow opposition or suffering to silence them, so they too exhibited longsuffering patience.

Third, Job in the Old Testament endured great suffering. His story is complicated, and we don't have time to cover it today. Suffice it to say, Job lost everything including possession, family members, and even his own health. And if you've read the book of Job, you know that for a season Job stridently questioned God. However, that was only a season. The real story of his suffering is told in **Job 1:21-22**

*And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

Job demonstrated longsuffering patience.

**James tells us to show longsuffering patience while we are waiting for Jesus' return.**

Waiting for Jesus' return informs our sense of purpose. We're not just waiting and watching while a series of random events transpire around us. Instead, we are waiting while Jesus is building his Kingdom and preparing for his return. Everything happens for a reason.

Plus, waiting for Jesus' return relativizes everything about here and now. In a sense, the fact that Jesus will one day return makes us appreciate the good times all the more. Even more, knowing that Jesus will return and overturn the broken world as it is to replace it with the perfect world as it should be, reminds us that any suffering or frustration we face is temporary.

Best of all, waiting for Jesus' return gives us something so amazing in front of us that we can endure almost anything while we wait!

So, James says, "establish your hearts" which is almost like saying, "fix your mind and courage." This is a season for longsuffering patience while we wait for Jesus' return.

### **Longsuffering is demonstrated most clearly in our ability to "put up with" one another.**

Let's be honest. This is a place where we struggle right now.

This season has left us all with a sense that we can't take any more. We can't take any more of the foibles, failures, and frustrations that people send our way. In particular, we can't take any more of the foibles, failures, and frustration we get from other followers of Jesus.

Think of the quantity of foibles, failures, and frustrations we can take as being like the capacity of a suitcase we tote behind us in life. When the suitcase is full, we can't take anymore.

For many of us, the suitcase of our longsuffering is full. In fact, we're toting around a suitcase that is bulging with zippers that are barely holding on. We've got a carry-on bag over our shoulder, and we have personal items in both hands. We can't take anymore!

What happens when the suitcase of our longsuffering is full?

We walk around in life thinking that we can't take one thing more.

Consequently, when we experience one more foible, failure, or frustration, we tend to lash out.

Worse, we are left with a vague sense that something must change. We'll change anything to make ourselves feel better! Even if it means blowing up our relationships with one another.

Can we strive for longsuffering patience instead? We have an opportunity to show godly character and to build it.

## **FOUR THINGS PATIENT PEOPLE KNOW.**

### **1. Patience ripens at its own rate.**

Developing patience is different than developing some other aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit.

For instance, joy is a little bit like strawberries. Strawberry plants are easier to grow. Plus, they produce a harvest of up to two quarts within just a few months. Similarly, as we seek to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit, joy can burst forth quickly.

Then there's kindness which is a little bit more like grapes. Grapevines require lots of work on an ongoing basis. However, grapevines produce abundantly and consistently if they are cared for. Kindness is like that in that it requires a decision and maintenance over time. However, if we will decide and keep making that decision, kindness bears fruit abundantly over time.

Patience is more like a pineapple. Pineapple plants must be intentionally planted. They put down roots and start to grow. Then it starts to send out shoots and produce more pineapple plants. However, the first plant takes 2-3 years to mature, and it only produces a single fruit. Then the plant dies. However, it leaves behind multiple other plants that are putting down roots and will one day produce delicious pineapples. Patience is more like the pineapple plant. It takes time and intentional cultivation to see patience grow in our lives. Patience does not come easily. However, when patience does take root in our lives, it produces big, dramatic differences. And when patience takes root in our lives, it keeps sending out shoots that eventually touch every area of our lives.

Patience ripens at its own rate.

## **2. Patience demands a decision.**

With the Fruit of the Spirit, it's not all about what we do.

We can't decide ourselves into godly character.

However, if we are going to develop the Fruit of the Spirit (particularly patience), then we have to decide to make patient choices.

That means doing the tough work of unpacking what patience looks like and then deciding to respond with patience whenever possible.

We have to do with the work here.

## **3. Patience requires repentance.**

When we decide to be patient, we will fail at first.

When we fail, we need to come before God with true regret. We can't come before God with a flippant attitude about our lack of patience. Patience is part of God's character and part of the godly character God expects us to develop, so when we fail in patience, we need to feel the weight of that failure and regret it.

Then we need to leave our guilt with Jesus and ask for forgiveness. Jesus gives us forgiveness freely. Even when we fail to be patient.

But how we think and act after we leave our guilt with Jesus is critical. If we leave our guilt with Jesus intending to be impatient all over again, then nothing will ever change. Repentance means walking away intending to change.

Patience requires repentance.

## **4. Patience comes from the Comforter.**

The key, Paul wrote, was to walk in the Spirit.

If we want the Fruit of the Spirit, we want to walk by means of God's Holy Spirit.

If we want to develop patience, then we will need to turn to the one Jesus calls the Comforter.

We will be led by the Spirit, live by means of or by the power and guidance of the Spirit of God, and to walk in step with the Spirit. In a sense, we are to practice matching our steps through life with those of God's Holy Spirit. Then, in time, patience will flourish in us.

## **We're talking about godly character, not good character.**

We can't develop patience and the Fruit of the Spirit by force of our own will. Good character relies on good decisions made over time. Godly character by contrast is driven by God.

May our desire to develop patience, godly character, and the Fruit of the Spirit drive us to the tutelage of God's Holy Spirit.

May our need for grace when we fail drive us to the mercy of Jesus Christ.