

Importance of Patience

Introduction - James 5:7-11

1. We live in a world that promises instant satisfaction of our needs and wants. We have instant internet downloads, express same-day delivery, instant messaging, next-day shipping, drive-thru restaurants, streaming services where we can watch what we want immediately, contactless payments, and even AI that can answer our questions in seconds. We've become so used to getting things quickly that waiting has become frustrating.
2. None of these things are wrong in themselves. They make life more convenient. But they can also condition us to expect everything to happen immediately. Simply put, we have become a people who do not like to wait.
3. The problem is that this mindset can easily spill over into our spiritual lives. We may expect an immediate answer to our prayers, immediate answers to our problems, instant spiritual growth. And this unwillingness to wait and be patient can lead to discouragement, frustration, and even unfaithfulness. That's why patience is such an important Christian virtue.
4. The first-century Christians James wrote to also knew what it was to wait. They were suffering injustice, facing hardship, and wondering how long they would have to endure. James does not promise that their trials will end immediately. Instead, he repeatedly urges them, "Be patient."
5. That same exhortation speaks just as powerfully to us today. Whether we are waiting for answers to prayer, enduring difficult trials, or learning to be patient with others, God's message is the same: "Be patient."
6. I want us to consider three important questions: What is patience? Why is it so important? How do we develop it?

I. What is Patience?

- A. There are several Greek words that are translated as patience, longsuffering, endurance, perseverance, and steadfastness. Different Bible versions sometimes use different words for the same passage. While there are slight differences in meaning, they present two main ideas of biblical patience.

1. Patience as longsuffering (James 5:7).

- a. This word literally means to suffer long. Suffer simply means to bear or endure something painful—whether emotionally, mentally, spiritually, or even physically.
- b. James illustrates this with the example of a farmer.
 - 1) The farmer prepares the soil, plants the seed, and then waits for the early and later rains, which normally fell between October and November and again between March and April. He cannot hurry the seasons. He simply has to wait. Many of James' readers were laborers, and some were likely farmers, so they immediately understood the illustration
- c. James applies this lesson to Christians
 - 1) These believers were being mistreated. Their wealthy employers were withholding the wages they had earned. James tells them not to become bitter or lose heart but to patiently wait on the Lord. In the same way, we often want immediate answers, but God teaches us to trust Him while we wait.
- d. God Himself demonstrates this kind of patience. "The Lord... is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)

2. Patience as endurance, perseverance, steadfastness (James 1:2-3; Romans 5:3).

- a. It is the idea of 'staying the course, of not being deterred, of remaining faithful during difficulty.
- b. Trials - persecution, family problems, ill health, financial struggles - have the potential to discourage us from remaining faithful.
- c. Yet God uses those very trials to strengthen our faith and develop endurance. As we continue to trust and obey Him through our difficulties, we through God's power are developing patience or steadfastness - practice of a skill or ability helps to develop and strengthen.

II. Why Must We Exercise Patience?

- A. Because God commands it.

1. James twice tells these Christians, "**Be patient**." This is an imperative—a command.
2. Just as we are commanded to love one another (Romans 12:10), be holy (1 Peter 1:15), be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32), and be constant in prayer (Romans 12:12), we are also commanded to be patient.

3. Patience is not merely a personality trait; it is a Christian responsibility. The demand for Patience in the different scenarios in life we may find ourselves isn't optional; but one of the many calls to obedience.

B. Because Patience is evidence we are walking by the Spirit

1. Paul writes: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22).
2. Every Christian struggles against the desires of the flesh. Left to ourselves, we naturally become impatient, irritable, and frustrated.
3. As we walk by the Spirit and submit ourselves to God's will, the Spirit gradually produces patience in our lives, and that patient spirit becoming increasingly evident and growing in our attitudes, our speech, and the way we treat other people.
4. So I need to ask myself: "Am I becoming more patient than I once was?"

C. Because Patience is necessary in our relationships

1. "We urge you, brethren... be patient with everyone" (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
2. We need patience in every relationship we have, especially with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. Patience helps us resist being overly critical or quick to judge. Instead, it teaches us to listen before we speak, to build others up rather than tear them down, to be considerate, supportive, and self-controlled.
4. The book of Proverbs repeatedly shows the value of patience.
 - a. Calms conflicts: "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute" (Proverbs 15:18).
 - b. Values self control above strength: "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city" (Proverbs 16:32 NASB).
 - c. Helps overlook offenses - "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11).
 - d. Strengthens relationships via careful speech "He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:27).
5. Am I demonstrating this type of patience in all my relationships?

D. Patience is necessary to reach heaven

1. "Therefore... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).
2. He compares the Christian life to a long-distance race. It's not a sprint—it's a marathon.
3. Marathon runners must push through pain, fatigue, difficult terrain, and moments when they feel like giving up. Many continue running long after the winner has finished because their goal is simply to finish the race.
4. The Christian life is much the same. There will be disappointments, hardships, setbacks, and seasons when we become weary. Patience keeps us moving forward when everything within us wants to quit.
5. The writer's point is clear: only those who endure to the end will reach the finish line and receive the reward God has promised.

III. How Do We Develop Patience?

A. We need to pray to God to help us grow in patience (James 1:5-6)

1. Developing patience begins by asking God for the wisdom we need. Rather than simply praying for God to remove every trial, we should pray for the wisdom to know how to respond in a way that honors Him. Often, that response requires patience.
2. Notice how James describes heavenly wisdom. It is peaceable, gentle, reasonable, and full of mercy—qualities that naturally accompany a patient spirit (James 3:17).
3. If we recognize impatience in our own lives, whether toward difficult circumstances or difficult people, we should humbly ask God to help us grow in patience (James 1:16-17).

B. We need to learn from godly examples (James 5:10-11).

1. James points us to the prophets as examples of faithful endurance. We admire men like Moses, Jeremiah, Elijah, and the other prophets because they faithfully served God despite rejection, hardship, and persecution
2. Job also teaches us an important lesson. He lost his possessions, his health, and his children. Although he struggled to understand his suffering and poured out his heart before God, he never abandoned his faith. Job reminds us that we can trust God even when begin to question it all.
3. Jesus is the greatest example of patience. He endured rejection, hostility, suffering, and ultimately the cross without retaliating. He also showed remarkable patience toward His disciples as they slowly learned His teaching. If we want to learn patience, there is no greater example than Christ Himself (Hebrews 12:2-3)

C. Learn to wait upon the Lord (Isaiah 40:28-31)

1. "... Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength..." (Isaiah 40:28-31).
2. Isaiah was speaking to God's people who would experience captivity because of their sin. They would have to wait many years before God fulfilled His promise to bring them home.
3. The same principle applies today. We do not develop patience simply by reading about it—we develop it by practicing it.
4. Waiting is rarely easy. We naturally want immediate answers and quick solutions. But God often uses seasons of waiting to deepen our faith, strengthen our character, and teach us to depend on Him.
5. As we patiently wait on the Lord, He gives us the strength to keep going until His purposes are accomplished.

Conclusion

1. In the New Testament, patience is described by several different words, but they all point to the same basic idea: waiting on God and faithfully enduring without giving up.
2. Patience is not simply the ability to wait; it is the ability to remain faithful while we wait.
3. God calls us to be patient in every area of life—in our trials, in our relationships, in our prayers, and in our service to Him.
4. As we trust God's wisdom and continue faithfully in His will, He will give us the strength to finish the race and receive the crown of life.