

Fruit Of The Spirit — Patience

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

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

? Have you ever wanted something so much that you had trouble waiting for it to happen?
(ie a job, relationship, vacation, etc.)

Read to the group: We usually think of patience within the context of waiting, “Like I need to be more patient with my puppy who pees on the floor.” But the bible actually uses it in a richer context and with the understanding that the person who needs patience is likely suffering great pains and lifelong trials. In Galatians 5, the NIV uses the word forbearance instead of patience. Forbearance is also used in Romans to describe God’s grace and salvation to us. Let’s start this study by looking at how God models this kind of patience for us.

Read to the group:

Romans 3: 23-26 (NIV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his **forbearance** he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Forbearance: This term is mostly used today in the context of financial aid or home mortgages. A forbearance is a special agreement between two parties to avoid the consequences of a loan default. The literal meaning of forbearance is “holding back.” In a Biblical context, God forbore His holy judgment against our sinful nature. As sinners, we all deserve immediate death, but God’s graceful forbearance allowed us to seek redemption through Christ. Pretty cool, huh?

Questions for Discussion:

? How is Christ’s redemptive work a demonstration of God’s patience towards us?

Possible Answer: We deserve punishment/judgment for our sins, but rather than being quick to exert his wrath, God offers us forgiveness through Christ. God’s patience is magnified by the fact that even though we continue to sin over and over, Christ’s death atones for all of it.

? Has anyone ever owed you a debt they were struggling to repay? How patient were you as they repaid that debt?

? How should God's patience with us inspire us to act towards others?

Read to the Group:

1 Peter 2:19-23 (NIV)

¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Questions for Discussion:

? Our lives are much different than they were 2000 years ago, but sin still exists. What does suffering look like today?

Possible Answers: There are extreme examples of persecution of Christians even today, but we are lucky in that we probably won't experience that sort of physical suffering given where we live. Still we may experience being mocked or viewed condescendingly for our beliefs. We also suffer simply as a result of being separated from Christ and struggle with sin as a result of living in a fallen world.

? Our impatience often stems from a desire for justice. Take a look at Romans 3:26 and 1 Peter 2:23.

How is justice described?

Possible Answers: In both Romans and 1 Peter, God is the one who has the right to justice (not us). 1 Peter promises that God will have justice, and Romans describes how that justice is achieved through Christ for those who have faith.

? Sometimes sin and injustice persists despite our efforts against them, or our petitions to God to alleviate our pain. In light of God's justice, how can we endure these trials and find patience when sin is active against us?

Possible Answers: We don't have to concern ourselves with what others should or shouldn't do or do or don't deserve. Our focus should be on what we can do to glorify God and model the love He has for us. We should keep in mind that we are all deserving of the same judgment and that even those who sin against us are offered grace through Christ. (For some additional verses that encourage this sort of patience see: Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 4:12-14, and James 5:7-11).

? The original Greek word for “example” in verse 21 was used in reference to a model that students would use when copying how to write and draw. In this context, how should Christ’s suffering be an example of patience for us?

Possible Answers: Christ went to the cross not to fulfill his own desires, but the desires of the Father. Likewise we should be able to endure our own trials for the sake of glorifying God and loving others.

Application Questions:

? We often think of patient people as those who are slow to anger, passive in confrontation, or quietly waiting for something to happen. In light of this study, what does a biblically patient person look like?

? How could walking with the Spirit lead to increased patience in your life?

? What is our community application?