

SPIRITUAL FRUIT

Patience

Galatians 5:22-25

Patience! Yes, patience is a spiritual virtue. We expect love, joy and peace to be on the list of spiritual fruit; but patience? Remember we are talking about virtues that the spirit of God produces in our life. Just as love, joy and peace are a part of our spiritual nature so is patience.

The interesting thing is, of all the spiritual virtues, the ones we have discussed and those we have yet to discuss, patience is the one that many people will admit they lack. Some even seem to be proud of being impatient. Whereas, few folk will admit they lack love, joy, peace or kindness. Not many will say, *“I just do not love enough. In fact, I prefer being a hater. I am a mean person and I like it.”*

As we continue to examine Paul’s list of spiritual virtues I realize why they are so important in our life. Take a moment to think of their opposites. That list would be—hate, fear, fracture, impatience, meanness, stingy, uncommitted, anxious and out-of-control.

Paul’s fruit list of spiritual virtues leads to a healthy meaningful life; which means the opposites lead to an unhealthy insignificant life. My friends, I may not be totally healthy and my life may not be completely meaningful but I sure want it to be headed in that direction; which means, I need to take Paul’s fruit list of spiritual virtues seriously—including patience.

Some English translations of scripture use the word longsuffering instead of patience. Longsuffering can be thought of as long-tempered instead of short-tempered. Those who are patient are not subject to sudden outbursts of anger and rage, they are not explosive. As a play on words I would like to suggest that for many folk the thought of being patient produces much long suffering.

So how does one access or tap into or even practice patience as a spiritual virtue? One way is by driving in Jacksonville traffic during rush hour! We laugh at this but friends not many years ago a new term came into our language—road rage! Someone is not driving fast enough or they do not get out of the way quick enough and for the impatient person road rage may occur!

Living or reacting impatiently can occur in response to other people, to events, to inanimate objects, to circumstances, and even to one’s self. Listen as I share some feelings that are typically associated with impatience: irritation, agitation, frustration, resentment, forgotten, anxious, burned out, tense, stressed, misunderstood, and nervous.¹ In many cases any of these words can be substituted for impatience. And remember, when we are being impatient we are not living from our spiritual nature.

Friends, the clue to having patience is found within. We already have access to patience—it is a part of our spiritual nature—so we cannot say we do not have patience. What we can say is we are choosing not to use it, to not tap into it, to not access it. We can say we are choosing to ignore that part of our spiritual nature. Yet, as with the other virtues on Paul’s fruit list, if we want to grow spiritually, it is absolutely necessary that we learn to

take personal responsibility for the way we respond in any given situation. If traffic is backed up and moving at a snails pace and I begin to act out by cussing and fuming I need to stop and ask myself what is going on inside of me to cause this kind of reaction to a traffic jam.

There are several quips that relate to patience, that most if not all of us, are familiar with. Let go and let God. Take one day at a time. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Easy does it. First things first.² Stop and count to ten. Don't blow your top. Don't sweat the small stuff. Take time to smell the roses. These are everyday reminders to be patient with one's self. And friends, practicing patience begins with self.

Patience is the ability to wait for an expected outcome without experiencing anxiety, tension, or frustration. **Patience is the ability to** let go of the need for immediate gratification. **Patience is the ability to** be tolerant, compassionate and understanding toward those who are slower than oneself in developing emotional maturity and coping abilities. **Patience is the ability to** believe in the concept of commitment and to be calm and considerate in handling growth issues in all relationships. **Patience is the ability to** feel peace and satisfaction about being on the path to recovery and personal growth. **Patience is the ability to** accept the non-enthusiastic response of others to one's personal growth and recovery. **Patience is the ability to** feel relaxed, calm and placid as one faces their daily schedule and the challenges it presents.³ **Patience is the ability to** get up and to try again after failing or making a mistake.

Friends, patience is not only about controlling one's temper—not being explosive in nature. Patience is about being good to one's self. Patience, rather than impatience, is better for one's mental and emotional well-being. Patience is better on the human body than impatience. And when we access patience it is an indication that we are living from our spiritual nature since patience has already been produced within us by the spirit of God. We already have patience; the question is—are we utilizing it?

Remember that love leads Paul's fruit list of spiritual virtues; with joy and peace following close behind. All of the spiritual virtues are interconnected—they do not stand alone—one leads to the other and supports the other. And interestingly enough when Paul defines love in I Corinthians 13 he begins by writing, "*Love is patient.*" I believe we can also reverse these words—patience is love or at least patience is an indicator of love. Love and patience are closely tied together. So it seems to me that when we find our self being impatient, with someone else, with a situation, or with one's self, we might then want to ask our self why we have ceased to love, at least in that moment or in that experience. And if we can discover why we are having difficulty with love we will probably know why we are having difficulty with patience.

Love is patient!

¹ Coping.org: Tools for coping with life's Stressors, Developing Patience.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.