

A New Hope: PATIENCE - 5

We have been talking about A New Hope - also known as the “Fruit of the Spirit.” The Lord wants to manifest His personal characteristics in your life and mine. Characteristics that empower us to experience the victorious Christian life.

Today we’re talking about the aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit that you might be tempted to skip - **Patience!** I have told many people... never pray for patience! Why, because God builds patience through trials and tribulations. But I am learning that patience is not something to be avoided and focus on something like joy or peace!

Patience has never been my greatest strength. Have you ever had a problem with patience? Patience is like one little boy in a department store; “He was at the end of an escalator, and he kept watching the railing as it went around. And a salesman came and said, ‘Son, are you lost?’ And he said, ‘No, I’m just waiting for my chewing gum to come back.’”

For me, I am learning how profound Patience – as God sees patience – is! **Patience is a promise of God that we can claim and practice,** then experience a transformation that empowers us to live the victorious life God created us for.

In Psalm 40:1, King David wrote, “*I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*” Patience is apart of a paradox! Two opposing ideas contained in the same truth. **Patience comes in the context of two things:**

1. **There’s the pressure of** our problems and circumstances, our difficult relationships, and the negative reactions that rise up within us.
2. **There’s the ability** to convert the pressure of those negative reactions into Godly responses using Patience. Patience tells us what to avoid and what to expect instead – with God’s characteristic of patience, there also comes an expectation. Patience empowers us to “create space” so we can hear God properly and pray the right thing.

I like the term from Psalm 40, “He (God) turned to me.” **In Hebrew, it means to turn toward and stretch out a hand.** It expresses God’s active, sovereign involvement in our life and circumstances. It means, we don’t have to struggle to get the Fruit of the Spirit, it flows from God freely, so it's full of expectation.

And because the Fruit of the Spirit is who God is; that means the Fruit of the Spirit is already present in a Christian - if we received Jesus, the Fruit of the Spirit is in us. **But, we need to learn to live what is in us.**

As with every other characteristic of the Fruit of the Spirit, **patience** isn't something God has, **it is who God is!** Patience is an important part of experiencing and participating in the Fruit of the Spirit; because the patience of God creates space where we can take a breath and allow the Holy Spirit to take control, empower us, and transform us!

Why? Because, when patience rises up in us, it pushes away any negativity and it allows us to learn and grow in Christ. King David understood the value of patience. That's why in Psalm 37:7-8 he said, *"⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸ Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil."* Without patience, often there's no learning or transformation taking place.

Problems can be prolonged in our life - because our negative reactions magnify our situations. But the Hebrew work for patience is "Savlānūt." It's an action word that describes the process of what to do and what to avoid.

When your life hits problems, and life causes you to spiral out of control or be wounded or fearful; **patience attracts a calm**, restful stillness and allows us to move forward with an assurance of who God will be for us and he will do in our situations, as the Lord stretches out His hand to us in our problems and conflicts.

Composer Joseph Haydn needed a flute player with patience in a musical piece he wrote, the flute did not have a piece to play until the 75th measure, and then had only **one** note to play. On the 75th measure, the flute player played that **one** note. And one of the people who played the flute in the Boston Symphony said, "When Haydn wrote that musical piece, he had a very special, patient person in mind."

When we talk about patience, we're talking about Savlānūt attracting long wrath and slow anger. My point, God empowers us to handle our anger slowly. Easy to talk about, but hard to do! But praise God, as Philippians 5:13 explains, *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

So, turn back to **today's scripture in Exodus 34:1-7**. Look at verses 5-7, God talked about experiencing patience.

34 The LORD said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. ³ No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain.”

⁴ So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. ⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, ***proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*** Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Did you hear it? *“The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God; slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”* Remember, the fruit of the spirit are all attributes of the Lord and here we see God's characteristic of patience – God being slow to anger.

Some people think anger is wrong, but anger in itself isn't a sin. Anger becomes a sin when it's uncontrolled. That's why Paul tells us in Ephesians not let the sun go down on our anger. What we're going to talk about today is the **root of impatience - uncontrolled anger**. Remember Patience or Savlănūt means **long wrath and slow anger**. **Patience attracts slow anger.**

As I grew up, I was taught anger was wrong - it was a sin. And because anger was a sin, no one talked about it. I also found, when Christians sin, we often like to call our sin something other than sin.

For example, instead of saying they're angry, Christians say they have righteous indignation – **that's Greek for being real ticked**. Remember, anger itself isn't wrong - but when anger becomes uncontrolled or undisciplined, it turns to rage and turns into all kinds of impatience, **that's when anger becomes a sin**.

As I learned to manage my impatience and anger, I found 7 biblical keys to practice Patience or manage anger, keeping it from sin.

1. Resolve to manage it.

"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city." Proverbs 16:32. This scripture means that anger can be managed. In fact, if anger is for a right cause and is managed directly, it's a powerful tool. Don't you get angry about injustice and sin?

But here's the problem, I've talked to people with an anger problem, they say, "I can't help it, when it hits, I'm a volcano and blow up." But you **can** manage it. **I'll prove it**. Let's say, you're really mad at your kids and yelling and screaming - **a conniption fit**. **Then the phone rings**. I've done it! You pick up the phone and say, "Hello" and sound so **civilized**? You can control it – we pick when we're going to be angry; that's why we get angry at our kids behind closed doors. A pastor I know said was told by a church member, "Well, my anger is bad. It's not controllable. It's probably the cross I have to bear." The pastor said, "No, it's not the cross you bear; it's the cross your wife has to bear. It's your sin; her cross."

2. Realize the cost.

Anger is one letter away from danger. *"A hot-tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble."* Proverbs 29:22, "You never win by blowing up. When you lose your temper, you lose." The Bible is specific about the damage done by uncontrolled anger. Listen to how it destroys relationships.

Proverbs 15:18, *"Hot tempers cause arguments."*

Proverbs 14:17, *"People with hot tempers do foolish things."*

Proverbs 11:29, *"The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left."* **Resentment is nothing more than stuffed anger**. In fact, there are two things society struggles with: depression and resentment. And the root cause of both – is anger – stuffed or uncontrolled.

You know, as parents, we all get angry with our kids. And you know what? That anger makes them straighten up quick doesn't it? So we parents tend to show anger quicker because it gives quick results. But the bible says, you may get quick results, but what happens is that it begins to go into resentment in their life and the payback sometimes comes even years later. So realize the cost.

3. **Reflect before reacting.**

"A stupid man gives free reign to his anger; a wise man waits and lets it grow cool." Proverbs 29:11

You know, delay is a tremendous tool in controlling your anger. I'm not talking about burying or delaying for months or weeks. I'm talking about catching yourself and pulling back for a half hour or so - letting it simmer a bit. Patience helps you **understanding** what's happening, your feelings, your reactions.

Anger is the result of ... Hurt, Frustration, Fear

We've all had those moments when we said something and then think, "I wish I wouldn't have said that." Right?

Like the guy who was so angry at his Dad and told his friend, "Man, I'm so angry at Dad. I'm going to tell him in a letter." And he wrote it, signed it, gave it to his friend and said, "Mail this for me." **But** his friend realized his anger. So instead of mailing it, he held on to it. The next day his buddy said, "I wish I didn't send that letter. I'd give \$50 to have it back." Sometimes we're not that fortunate to get the letter back. We know what it's like to not delay and pay the consequences for it; we need to reflect before reacting.

4. **Release your anger appropriately.**

There are right ways and wrong ways to do this. *"If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin."* Ephesians 4:26 *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."* Proverbs 29:11

Now, Psychology says - on the inside, we're a bucket full of anger and to get rid of it, you need to spill it out. That's called "emotional venting." They say once you empty the bucket of anger you'll be okay.

That may be what psychology says, but that isn't how God says it works. You see, we're not a bucket full of anger. We're a factory. When anger is released inappropriately, it just increases the volume of anger that's inside us. God's word and human experience will tell you - if you become aggressive, it usually leads to more aggression. If you become abusive, it usually leads to more abuse. If you become angry, it leads to more anger until it becomes a pattern within your life.

How do you respond to anger? Here's two options:

- **Confess it.** This is a great way to respond, the psalmist did it. If you really want to know a healthy way to release anger is to read the psalms. David did a marvelous job venting to God about his felts and thoughts.
- **Express it.** Learn to express it in positive, healthy ways. I'm convinced, everybody needs a way to release anger that doesn't hurt others. There's exercise, sports, prayer, and most importantly learning God's process of dealing with pain. So we need to learn to release anger appropriately.

5. Re-pattern your mind.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

You see, the way you think determines how you feel. The way you feel determines how you act. Your beliefs control your behavior.

If I'm acting angry, it's because I'm feeling angry. If I'm feeling angry, it's because I'm thinking angry. So I have to go back to re-pattern the way I think, since my thinking controls my behavior... and we reprogram our mind by reading and memorizing the scriptures.

6. Relate to people that are patient.

"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared." Proverbs 22:24-25. Anger is contagious, we learn how to blow up from watching others blow up. That's why the proverb writer says, "Don't hang around with those kinds of people, if you do, you'll find yourself becoming increasingly angry."

7. Rely on Christ's help.

"May God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement, help you to live in

complete harmony with each other -- each with the attitude of Christ toward the other." Romans 15:5 **Patience is waiting without worrying.**

When God develops you and me, character building is a process. It takes time. **You see, God's motto in developing our patience goes something like this:** best attributes in life are developed through a long, tedious, trying process. Your greatest accomplishments will be made over a long period of time.

In the Old Testament, it took Moses 40 years in the back-side of the desert or all the years Joseph spent in prison. If you look at the great men of God, like David, he spent years as a refugee in caves, even after he was anointed to be king.

The best things in life take a long time. We'll never get what we need from God if we pray, "Oh, God, give me patience and give it to me now." I've prayed that prayer before, have you? You know it's interesting; I looked up the word: "wait." It's used 106 times in the bible! "*Wait on the Lord,*" wrote the psalmist, "*and be of good courage and he will strengthen your heart. Those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth.*" And God's word to Isaiah, "*Yet those who wait upon the Lord, they shall renew their strength.*" We need to rely on God's help.

Prayer: