

We begin our study on patience as a quality of the fruit of the Spirit in our life. Patience has many sides to it. We will uncover and bring to light how important hope, perseverance, ENDURANCE, mercy and forgiveness are to our developing patience.

The practice of patience helps complete something that is not in us now. It is about what we *do* as well as what we *don't* do. It is important to understand that patience means to persevere and bear up under things. It does not allow you to give up in circumstances or give in under a trial. It is endurance in "things of circumstance".

We need only to look at the life of Esther to see there may have been several times when she just wanted to give up and say "I quit!! I don't want to be queen anymore!" Perhaps about the time her uncle Mordecai sent a message to her in Esther 4:13-14 saying, "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape For if you remain silent at this time...you and your father's family will perish."

Or what about facing the king uninvited when he had the power to have her head chopped off. She hadn't even been called to him in a month for goodness sake! Scar-r-ry stuff! She certainly needed endurance and perseverance in her circumstance.

What about the story of Naomi? A woman in a foreign country among people who worshipped idols. The pagans of this land also sacrificed young girls and babies to please their gods. She went there with her husband and two sons in search of food as a FAMINE left little food for those remaining in her homeland. Within ten years her husband and both sons died and she was all alone with her sons' two widowed wives. She had no way to make a living for herself or her daughters-in-law. Not much hope for her future. Stressful!

Hebrew 10:36 tells us "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God you will receive what he has promised".

If we persevere in the will of God we receive what he has promised! Esther and Naomi persevered and endured very stressful and difficult times. In so doing they received God's reward. A nation is saved and an old woman and her foreign born daughter-in-law become part of the genealogy of the living God, Jesus Christ.

Think of times in your life that were hard. Not just difficult, but really hard. Was there a time when you wanted to give up? Share this if you would like.

Hope is a big part of patience. Hope is the desire for something good and expecting to receive it. Biblical hope is having a positive outlook toward what will happen according to God's promises. Not what might happen but what *will* happen.

Patience then is perseverance and endurance, bearing up under difficult things or circumstances. But patience is **INSPIRED** by hope of a good outcome. Many of us have suffered great **FRUSTRATION** as we tried to practice patience with endurance in our own strength. Hopefully, we will learn to practice this patience as the Holy Spirit expresses *His* patience through us.

In Colossians 1:10-12 the Apostle Paul also points to the importance of being patient with people. Let's read it. What do you think is easier, being patient with circumstances or people? Give some examples if you would like.

The patience that comes as fruit of the Spirit also has mercy. Mercy is compassion, pity and goodness. We need look no further than our Savior hanging on the cross for the greatest example of mercy. His compassion and pity for all sinners led Him to the cross to give His life for our sins. Let's read 2 Peter 3:9 and 3:15. Fill in the blanks.

"He is _____ with you, not wanting anyone to _____
but everybody to come to _____. " And in 2 Peter 3:15
"Bear in mind that our Lord's _____ means our salvation."

We are saved because God's mercy is shown in His patience. God's patience *with* us means salvation *for* us. Let's turn to Matthew 18:21-35 and read about how mercy looks in real life. Each time you see the word patience it is a fruit of the Spirit. Underline it.

As we read this story Jesus told we see that being patient with people also requires forgiveness, pity and mercy. Patience is the vessel through which God pours His mercy. Mercy comes from forgiveness.

Biblical forgiveness means to let go from one's power or possession, to let go free, allow to escape. But unforgiveness means we are **BOUND** to what we will *not* forgive and indeed what we hate the most. It's like having the person you will not forgive tied to your back.

Who and what must we forgive? Jesus taught us to pray: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive EVERYONE who sins against us" Luke 11:4

We may have very good reason *not* to forgive someone. But God wants so much to pour His patience through those of us who have:

- * every reason to want REVENGE for someone who has done wrong to us
- *every reason to be without mercy
- *every reason to be angry and bitter

If you have good reason to be mad or to hold a grudge God wants to bless you. YES, bless you with biblical patience complete with mercy and forgiveness. Why is it important for me to forgive someone I have a reason to be angry at?

It is difficult to live a Christian life with a person tied to your back. Perhaps even someone who is dead! Or maybe many people, since unforgiveness can be a habit. Do you have a habit of unforgiveness? How many are you carrying on your back as unforgiven?

You cannot be free to live by the Holy Spirit when you carry the load of unforgiveness. God's Word calls us to forgive. Luke 6:37

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

Do not condemn, (blame others) and you will not be condemned (blamed).

Forgive, and you will be forgiven"

Turn to Matthew 6:14-15 Mark this so you will be able to find it if you are unforgiving

The one who will not forgive always suffers *more* than the one not forgiven. In our parable of the unforgiving servant both were put in prison but only the one who did not give mercy and forgiveness was tortured. Unforgiveness tortures the person who carries it on his back. WE NEED TO FORGIVE FOR OUR OWN SAKE !!

God creates ministry from misery. Romans 8:28 Christ has a purpose in the pain you've suffered. Until you surrender to His purpose He cannot work *your* suffering for *your* good. If you hold onto your suffering and unforgiveness it will be for nothing but grief and pain in your life.

How does God turn misery to ministry? Let's finish with 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Patience is about what we *do* as well as what we *don't* do. Don't have an unforgiving heart.

Memory Verse: Colossians 3:12-13 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you".

IS THERE A TRUTH TO BELIEVE? The patience of the Holy Spirit is seen in our willingness to persevere, endure, hope, forgive and show mercy to others.

WHAT DID GOD SHOW US TODAY?

- 1) As we practice patience we are to endure and persevere in circumstances.
- 2) Patience is inspired by hope.
- 3) Patience that comes as fruit of the Spirit shows mercy, compassion, pity and goodness.
- 4) Mercy comes from forgiveness. It means to let go free as God set us free from our sin and death. We are to forgive *everyone* who sins against us. Luke 11:4

What is the hardest thing about patience? How will you overcome it?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

Prayer Request: _____

Word Study:

- 1) bound: tied up in bonds, to bind together. His hands and feet were bound with rope.
- 2) endurance: bearing pain, hardships; the ability or strength to continue under stress or trial. It took great endurance to finish the long race.
- 3) famine: extreme lack of food, causing hunger and starvation. The famine spread further
- 4) frustration: to be defeated or blocked with a feeling of disappointment.
- 5) inspired: influenced with the spirit to do something by divine direction. He inspired men.
- 6) revenge: to punish or harm for a wrong doing to someone; it is done in a resentful or hateful manner. The woman took revenge in her anger at the person responsible for it.