

Pastor Jim Lloyd

Date: October 7, 2018

Title: Fruit of the Spirit Series – 5. Patience: Patience, Please

Text: Habakkuk 2:3

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) – *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, PATIENCE, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”* The King James Version uses the word “longsuffering” for “patience.” Get that – L-O-N-G SUFFERING. How many of you realized when you prayed John Stott’s prayer, you were praying for not only patience but to be LONG SUFFERING? Imagine if we formed three lines this morning: #1 – Long suffering here in the middle, Short suffering on my right AND No suffering on my left. Which line would you head for? Patience isn’t really any better. James 1:3 says, *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”* So there is a connection to the trying of your faith & patience – tribulation & patience. Does that mean when you pray for patience, you are also asking for tribulation? I’ll let you figure that one out.

I have a couple exercises for today’s sermon. Exercise #1 – Take the mint you received (each person received a peppermint candy): You can (1) Eat it now or at any time during the service (2) Show it to me at the end of service, and I’ll give you a second one (3) If you get a second one, show them both to me tonight before service, and I’ll give you a third one. Exercise #2 – Put your watch in your pocket or purse and don’t look at it at all during the rest of today’s service. Don’t look at the clock on your phone either and don’t turn around and look at the clock on the wall.

In our age of hyper-connectivity, I’m afraid that patience is becoming a lost art. More and more we expect things to happen immediately. Back a few years ago, I listened to a pastor who stated that his sermons are exactly 22 minutes long. Today many a church has a large timer facing the front that counts down from 60 minutes. God gets one hour and not a minute more! It used to be that Sundays were the Lord’s Day! Some of you may remember this: It used to be, whenever you purchased an item via mail order, you were reminded in the small print: please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. There’s no 4-6 week stipulation these days. About a year ago I ordered a pair of glasses from China. I ordered them on a Friday, got them on Tuesday, AND MONDAY WAS A HOLIDAY! With Amazon it’s often two days, and on occasion I’ve gotten my item the next day, and I understand that they’re working on same day delivery – because they know – PEOPLE DON’T LIKE TO WAIT! It used to be that when you called someone on the phone, and they weren’t home, you just heard the phone ring and ring and ring. No machine picked it up. And, if they WERE home, but on the phone, you got a busy signal. No matter how much you needed or wanted to speak to them or wanted to leave a message, you just HAD to wait. Today technology has decreased the amount of time spent waiting to connect via phone. Most of you likely brought a phone to church. It used to be there wasn’t even a landline in a church. Many text today because we no longer have time or patience for a conversation. The Hollyoaks traveled to Africa this week. I had a text when they arrived in Belgium. Diane got a text when they arrived in Uganda. It was almost instantaneous! If I were to text them now, I might get a response right now! How many of you have a microwave oven? How many remember the days BEFORE the microwave? Some of us would have already starved to death if it weren’t for the microwave. Why do you use the microwave? Convenience & Time – We are always in a hurry! I could go on and on; these technological advances are great. I’m NOT suggesting we abandon them, but the fact is that they tend to increase our penchant for impatience. I think I would be accurate in saying that patience today is in short supply. We want WHAT we want and we want it NOW! We see examples of impatience every day in others...don’t we? And, IF we look closely enough, and if we listen to the Holy Spirit, we’ll also catch examples of impatience in ourselves.

Now, the fruit of the Spirit is PATIENCE. Like every aspect of the Spirit’s fruit, this is a quality WE must cultivate, so today we will look at how to cultivate patience in three key areas of life: We need to be more patient with CERTAIN SITUATIONS, with OTHERS, and with OURSELVES.

1. Patience is a willingness to wait just a little longer. Now, this may seem obvious, but it’s a WILLINGNESS that we need to cultivate. When we are impatient in certain situations, sometimes our impatience is NOT ONLY WITH the situation, it’s with the one WHO CONTROLS the situation – our Heavenly Father. We have a tendency to complain to God when things don’t come together as quickly as we would like. Have you ever been in that situation? You’re praying for a job, or for healing, or the resolution of a financial problem, or a relationship problem. With each passing day, the situation seems to get larger and larger...and God doesn’t seem to be in nearly as much of a hurry as you or me. Someone said when it comes to waiting for the right time, WE tend to look at the CLOCK, but GOD looks at the CALENDAR. That’s because His timing is

perfect and he knows so much more about the situation than you or I ever will. And one of the things that HE knows, that we so often forget, is that the simple act of waiting – being patient – can make you a BETTER person. There was an interesting study conducted by Stanford University back in the nineties that taught us something about this. (Video of “The Marshmallow Test” was shown here. An adult gave different children one marshmallow and they could either eat it right away OR if they waited until the adult came back, they would get another one. Cute video.) The findings and observations have been most interesting. Here’s what has been determined: The children who were able to delay their gratification (1/3 of them), were MORE SUCCESSFUL as adults. They had LOWER rates of DIVORCE, LOWER rates of ADDICTION, HIGHER SAT scores (averaged 210 points higher), BETTER SALARIES, and they were even LESS LIKELY to be overweight! Isn’t that amazing? PRACTICING PATIENCE – the ability to delay gratification just a little longer – makes you a better person AND gives you a better life. Many times we think we are waiting until GOD is FINALLY READY to resolve a situation, but the truth COULD BE that HE is waiting until YOU are ready! He is waiting for YOU to become the person He created YOU to be – a person CONFORMED to the IMAGE of JESUS CHRIST, a person FILLED with the FRUIT of the HOLY SPIRIT. If you find yourself impatient with a situation – and impatient with God’s timing – remember what He said to the prophet Habakkuk – *“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”* These words, spoken to Habakkuk in a specific situation for his day and time, also apply to you and me today. The solution to your situation will come AT the appointed time. Though it linger, WAIT for it. Patience is the willingness to say: Okay, I can put off that marshmallow for just a little while longer. I trust that God is in control of this situation, and I will give Him the time to do what He needs to do in my life, to make ME the person He created me to be. Now, this patience that we show toward difficult situations, we ALSO need to extend to others.

2. Patience is a willingness to give others room to grow. One of the worst things that could happen for any of us would be that God should suddenly decide to be as impatient with you and me as we are with one another. Where does our patience most often wear thin in how we relate to others? We see it in TRAFFIC, in line at the SUPERMARKET, in the DOCTOR’S WAITING ROOM – and if you make someone wait, you can expect to hear about it. Our impatience with others includes an unspoken subtext that says, “I am better than you are; I am more important than you.” For example, an impatient person might say as he’s about to pull into your parking space at the Walmart parking lot, “I shouldn’t have to wait WHILE YOU carefully put your groceries in the trunk, return the shopping cart to the shopping cart station, buckle your child into his car seat, and adjust your rear view mirror before you FINALLY decide to back out. Get a move on. My time is valuable, and you’re wasting it!” Back in the sixties people would wear buttons that said: PBPGINFWMY. It stood for “Please Be Patient. God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.” That is a great attitude for us to extend to others, to recognize that God is doing His work in this other person’s life, and so I CAN BE AS PATIENT WITH YOU AS GOD IS WITH ME. That is why Paul said, *“Be kind and compassionate with one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32). This is something we often times find difficult to remember – that person who is trying your patience isn’t any less perfect than you. If GOD can be patient with YOU, YOU can be patient with OTHERS. For this reason, Paul said, *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”* (Ephesians 4:2). LOVE – the first listed fruit of the Spirit – is demonstrated with patience. A patient person tends to be more JOYful. And a patient person’s life will be marked with more PEACE. Every time I’m tempted to lose patience and tell someone that they’re driving me up the wall, I have to remember that MY wall might be rather full of people that I have driven up there – because God isn’t finished with me yet, either. Let me say this as your pastor – I NEED your patience, and I NEED your mercy, and I NEED your forgiveness, and I NEED room to grow. We ALL need it. In fact, it is at this point that we run into a bit of a self-contradiction. On the one hand, we have a tendency to be completely blind to our own faults while we point out the faults of others OR we become so aware of our faults that we obsess to the point of neurosis. And, by the way, I can be guilty of both – on the same day!

3. Patience is a willingness to try again. When we stop being overly critical of others and we decide to take a closer look at ourselves...it can get discouraging. I speak from experience. I’ve been a believer for most of my life and I still have my struggles. When you get serious about holiness, I want you to know that there will be times when you have to deal with discouragement head on. Holiness doesn’t happen as quickly as we would like. Holiness, like patience, is a process that develops over time. It involves a willingness to try again. Proverbs 24:16 – *“For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again...”*. What’s the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous? The righteous get back up. They don’t stop. They keep at it. Sometimes it’s the hardest thing in the world to do. It’s generally easier to quit. It’s so much easier to say, “I’m tired of failing in this area; I should just surrender to the idea that I’ll always be this way, and give up.” At that moment, the Holy Spirit would speak into your heart: “NO! NO! NO! Don’t you dare give up!” Be as patient with

YOURSELF as God has been with you. A few minutes ago I talked about giving others room to grow. Now I'm saying GIVE YOURSELF ROOM TO GROW. I'm saying: Please be patient with yourself, because GOD isn't finished with YOU, either. There comes a time in every person's quest for spiritual growth when they must say: I will not use the put-downs of others as an excuse to give up on myself. I am going to try again. Here's a promise you can claim: Philippians 1:6 – *"...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* God has begun a good work in you, that you should be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. HE wants to finish what HE started. It goes without saying that the more you surrender yourself to Him, the more you will grow into His likeness. But no matter how you look at it, it's a process that TAKES TIME. It's a PROCESS that requires not only GOD'S PATIENCE, but YOUR PATIENCE.

Conclusion: In this age of instant everything, it's hard for some to accept the idea that in God's economy, everything doesn't happen in a flash. The difficult situations you face – He WILL resolve them at the appointed time, AND He will likely teach you some lessons along the way, lessons that will make YOU better, and make YOUR LIFE better. Those people who try your patience – let them be a reminder of the patience God has shown to you AND let yourself be an example to them of God's patience to us all. When it comes to your own struggles, your own failures, and you're tempted to give up, show the SAME PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF that God has shown to you and everyone else. Try again. Romans 8:28 – For those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, God has promised to cause every situation to work together for good. Philippians 1:6 – He promised to finish the work He began in each of us, until we are like Jesus. That's His promise. Habakkuk 2:3 – Though it linger, WAIT FOR IT. In a moment, Pastor Norm will take us to the Lord's table. 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV) says – *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* Why do we partake of communion? To proclaim the payment that Jesus made for our sins – we proclaim the Lord's death. For how long? Until He comes. What do we do in the meantime? Exercise patience. We WAIT for the Lord's return. Habakkuk 2:3 (NIV) – *"Though it linger, WAIT FOR IT; it will certainly come and will not delay."*