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Is the Character of Patience working in you? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Patience from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How is Patience exhibited in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a more Patient attitude?
3. What blocks the practice of Patience in my life?
4. How can I make Patience function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Patience, in some translations is *called Longsuffering*; this calls for showing tolerance and fortitude toward others, even accepting difficult situations with them-and God-without making demands or conditions. Patience is our "staying power." It is like perseverance and the endurance to not give up; it is about actively overcoming our situation-not just sitting, accepting, and doing nothing! It allows us to endure a less than desirable situation, to make us better, more useful, and even optimistic and prudent. Hence, its other name, *longsuffering*. It allows us to put up with others who "get on our nerves" without losing other characteristics of grace.

(Hosea 2:19-23; Psalm 33:20; Matthew 27:14; Romans 5:3; 12:12; Galatians 5:1; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:11; James 1:3-4,12; 5:10-11).

Impatience, annoyance, intolerance, worry, fear, and distrust are the opposites of Patience. These prevent us from seeing, as our Lord wants us to see, that all things will work for His good in the end (Rom. 8:28). We should hang on, place our trust in Him, and not let the temporary things of life bother or distract us from our purpose and call.

Patience is an essential aspect toward maturity and growth as a Christian, yet it is not a fun thing to obtain. We, as fallen humanity, do not like to wait, especially in our fast paced, and fast food society. We may cry out to God and ask that He give us Patience, NOW! Yet, if He did, would we have it? It is not likely, as it needs to grow through difficulties so it can build and improve. It is not something we neither get off the shelf of a bookstore nor find in a hurry. Yet, we can be patient and live without anxiety. The key is to have a trust that our true security is to be in God's will and the spiritual blessings we have are because of Christ in our lives. This gives us absolute confidence in God, even in the midst of crises and anguish.

Patience allows us to handle the distress and times of waiting and confusion. This even allows us to not only endure, but thrive in trying circumstances that threaten our pretenses and ability to persevere, feeling out of control, or experiencing limits to what we want to accomplish, such as pain, suffering, or loss. Here, it is all of the above for David in the Psalms, including betrayal as well (Psalm 4). So we can see what the Lord has done for us, so we don't forget His grace, His provisions, and His answered prayers and blessings. We are not to be overcome with the struggles of the moment so we do not see how He has brought us through them in the past. We are to refresh our memory and confidence in Him. Confidence comes from our faith and is inspired by mutual encouragement to see what is important, which is what we have in Christ and not what we lost or could have had.

To understand patience is to understand our God who is sovereign and in control! God's mighty hand was in the environment and in humanity before the beginning of time, and continues today and on to eternity. He will judge the quick (alive) and the dead (Acts 10:42; 1 Peter 4:5; The Apostolic

Creed). He made the universe; He made you for a plan and a purpose. You are no mistake or back-up idea; therefore, you are wanted and have a destiny. Thus, we are called to realize the importance of seeing Christ and applying His Lordship to our lives. We have no knowledge of God's timing! It seems that God is slow to us, but He is in absolute control and we can have patience and trust in Him and His timing. We are impatient with our thinking and expectations, whereas God is patient, allowing His grace and plan to work out. We are called to be obedient and work out and at times wait actively in His Word and truth.

When our perseverance and patience is working we can endure and not give up (Luke 8:15; 21:19). We who are in Christ are blessed by God's grace by our covenant relationship with Christ who comes to us and saves us. This is significant as it echoes what Christ has and will do for us. God is good, and the only ones who are good are those who are in right standing with God. Christ gives us this, which we do not deserve. Our patience comes from our *Trust in the LORD*. As it denotes, to place our faith in God so we have conviction and commitment to know Him and rely on Him (Ex. 14:32; Psalm 37:3; Prov. 3:5; Jer. 39:18; Nahum 1:7; Acts 14:23).

Patience will allow us to receive and participate in God's love as it builds loyalty and faithfulness, as in the life of Hosea. It will take us beyond our comfort zone into an area we do not want to go. Yet, when we do, we are better and more able to be used by God and to be available for others. Without Patience, we cannot be used effectively in the lives of others, as they will seem repugnant to us, and we will be callous and unsympathetic towards them. Patience will allow us to manage anger and problems, and to wait on God's timing. Patience will allow us to forgive (Rom. 5:8), as Christ forgave us and has Patience with us. Patience will allow us to endure and go on, even when we do not feel like it. It will see the hope that is ahead, when the clouds of our lives and experiences block its view from our site. Patience will allow us to cling to Christ no matter what happens. Patience is hanging on to what is good. When we are impatient, we will miss a lot in life, especially in our relationships, because we will give up too easily. Allow the Potter to put you on His wheel and form you in His time!

Reflection

Our God has steadfast love for us and is here, even when people make difficulties and barriers against us. When we feel distressed and confused, and wonder if this is worth it, if this is all, God is there—even when we do not feel or see Him. His Love is persistent, and this prime Character from means that He is a long-suffering God and He empowers us to be so too. God delays His judgment, which reveals His love, grace, and mercy for the consummation of His purpose. We can take comfort in that He is a God of grace and mercy and is patient with us when we do not deserve it. He seeks our repentance and trust. Therefore, we have no need to exercise impatience or be confused or allow the mocking or misleading of others to distract us from His purpose and plan (John 6:39).

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Gen. 39:19-23; Job 1:13-22; Matt. 27:11-14; James 5:7-11)
- Here are negative examples from Scripture (Num. 20:1-12; 1 Sam. 13:8-14; 2 Kings 6:33; Luke 10:38-42)

Further Questions

1. How would you define Patience?
2. What are the things that cause you to be impatient or distrustful?
3. How does Fear counteract Patience?
4. How can you make James 1:3-4 work in you? Are you willing to allow Patience to develop in you, even through times of waiting and confusion?
5. When have you most been filled with Patience?
6. In what situation did you fail to have Patience when you should have?
7. What issue in your life would improve with more Patience?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put Patience into action in a specific situation. Perhaps you could learn to relax when things do not work out your way, or refuse to allow your circumstances to get in the way of your Patience.

Remember, the Fruits of the Spirit are not options!