

**Galatians 5: 22; “The Believer’s Longsuffering”, Message # 45 in the series –
“Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on September 30th,
2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.**

Longsuffering is a grace we are told here. Like the other graces which we are studying in this verse, it is something which comes to us by the working of the Holy Spirit in our heart and mind, and we pray to be filled with this grace, and as we pray for the wisdom to exercise this grace. 1st of all, tonight, I want to attempt to define the words longsuffering and patience. 2nd – I want to show you that longsuffering is a grace which is built up by God into a character quality in the life of the Christian.

1st of all – Let’s attempt to define the words longsuffering and patience.

Turn with me over to Colossians chapter 1, verses 9-12. “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” Now, I want you to understand that both the word, “patience” and the word “longsuffering” are in verse 11 of this passage. This must mean that there is a difference between them; that they are not being used to refer to exactly the same thing. And yet, both of these words are used by different translations in regard to our text, “the fruit of the Spirit is patience”. Some translate it “patience”, and some translated it “longsuffering”. It is translated “longsuffering” in our New King James Translation, and the King James translation. And it is translated “patience” in the New American Standard and the English Standard Version. The actual word used by the apostle Paul in the Greek is μακροθυμια (mak-roth-oo-mee`-ah) This is a compound word made up of Makros (long or far) and Thumos (wrath or fierceness) Although thumos can mean wrath or fierceness, its usage in this compound form carries the idea of 'temper.' Thus, makrothumia denotes remaining in a state of emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances.”

The Greek word for patience is actually ὑπομονὴ. (hupo-mone) This word is a compound word made up of two words – Hypo (a preposition meaning “under”) and moneo (a verb meaning to “remain under” or “abide under” difficult circumstances – as when it is not possible to escape or avoid them. Vine’s Expository dictionary gives the meaning as to “bear up courageously” (under suffering). (Tony Garland’s analysis, found on-line at www.spiritandtruth.org. Question 51: Patience versus Longsuffering.) He says: “As one can see, these words are very close in meaning and it is impossible to make a hard and fast distinction between where one or the other might be used to denote the idea of endurance and patience. Within the context of Colossians 1:11, the word translated by patience emphasizes endurance in the midst of difficult circumstances whereas the word translated by longsuffering emphasizes the attitude or frame of mind we are to have during the difficult time.” (end of quote)

I myself would say that patience is the ability which comes to us as we pray, to wait upon the Lord for the right time and the right way to say a certain good thing, or do a certain good thing, or see a certain good thing come to pass in our experience. Longsuffering I would say, is the ability it is to bear with the affronts and injuries, and those things which people might say or do, which do not seem right to us. In other words, patience relates to waiting; longsuffering relates to enduring; the first is positive in our experience and the second is negative in our experience, but both things can be done together with joy, realizing that we have Christ with us and His grace at work in our heart. The Cambridge Greek commentary says concerning patience and

longsuffering in Colossians 1: 11 – “ὕπομονήν καὶ μακροθυμίαν mean - “fortitude and forbearance.” This commentator goes on to say: “πομονή lays stress on the person who possesses it not being affected.” Hence it seems to refer only to things, i.e. to trials in themselves, whether from God or from man. It is thus used of man only.” “(even in Romans 15:5).” “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Μακροθυμία on the other hand suggests that if the person were affected it would alter his behavior to others. Hence it is used especially with reference to persons and may also be used of God (e.g. Romans 2:4; 1Peter 3:20; cf. Luke 18:7). Thus here ὕπομονή means their endurance of all trials in a hopeful spirit, such as Christ Himself had, 2nd Thessalonians 3:5, and μακροθυμία means their evenness of temper, free from all irritation or impatience (cf. Trench, Synon. § LIII.). They were in need of encouragement.”

John Gill says on Colossians 1: 11 – “unto all patience; to bring forth fruit with patience: To run with patience the race set before them; to bear patiently all afflictions and tribulations; to wait patiently for the things promised by God, and for the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the heavenly glory or hope laid up for them in heaven: and longsuffering; to be slow to anger, and not easily provoked to wrath; to be ready to forgive injuries; and to bear long, and with patience, all reproaches and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; all which require daily fresh supplies of grace and strength, especially to endure all with joyfulness, as well as with patience and longsuffering, with a cheerful spirit, or with joy in the Holy Ghost; to esteem reproach for Christ's sake above the riches and honors of this world; to rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. This requires strength above that of nature, and a renewed supply of that of grace.” (end of quote) I think that we can see that although the words patience and longsuffering can be used interchangeably at points, nevertheless we always would want to note the context in determining just what is being said in the Scriptures when one or the other word is used; either patience or longsuffering.

Look with me over at 2nd Corinthians 6, verses 3-6. “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.” “But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” The words, “in much patience”, in verse 4, are translated in the NAS as “in much endurance”; the word being used there in the Greek is ὕπομονήν. But the word μακροθυμίαν in verse 6 is also translated “patience” there – “in purity, in knowledge, in patience”, in the NAS, while in the New King James and King James it is translated – “by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering”. In verse 6, John Gill says: “by longsuffering: not easily provoked to wrath, but bearing with patience every indignity and affront.” And so I myself believe that this word in our text means this very thing; being with patience every indignity and affront, but not denying the more positive aspects of patience in terms of waiting God’s timing to do and say that which is good.

Now 2nd - I want to show you that longsuffering is a grace which is built up by God into a character quality in the life of the Christian.

To be patient and longsuffering are graces which we have the responsibility to put on, and walk in. Turn with me over to Colossians 1: 9-12. “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully

pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” Now, you can see here that to be patient and exercise longsuffering require that you must be strengthened with all the might of Christ’s glorious power, in order that you might be able to exercise these twin graces to the glory of God. The goal in the Christian life is that you might bear fruit for God in every good work and that you might increase in the knowledge of God. This means that you are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit very practically into all the truth of the word of God in relation to all the situations that He will providentially lead you into. In your relationships with others, especially in the body of Christ, there will be a great need for you to put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering. There will be times when you will need to bear with people, forgive people who you have a complaint against; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Let us ask ourselves whether we are doing this very thing, and whether we are longsuffering with people who may grate against our nerves by the way that they say and do things? Patience and longsuffering are very much needed graces in living the Christian life. William Hendriksen in his commentary says: “Longsuffering characterizes the person who, in relation to those who annoy, oppose, or molest him, exercises patience.” “He refuses to yield to passion or to outbursts of anger.” “Longsuffering is not only a human but also a divine attribute, being ascribed to God (Romans 2: 4; 9: 22) and to Christ (1st Timothy 1: 16) as well as to man (2nd Timothy 4: 2).” “As a human attribute it is inspired by trust in the fulfilment of God’s promises.” Emphasis on this virtue was greatly needed by the Galatians, who as has been shown, were probably being torn by strife and the party spirit.” “Besides, longsuffering is a mighty weapon over against the hostility of the world in its attitude toward the church.” (end of quote)

To confirm this, I want you to look with me over at 2nd Timothy 4: 2. “Preach the word!” “Be ready in season and out of season.” “Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Look also at 2nd Timothy 3: 10-14 – “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured.” “And out of them all the Lord delivered me.” “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” “But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

You can see from the verse in 2nd Timothy 4: 2 that Paul was exhorting Timothy to preach the word with all longsuffering. What did this mean? It meant that whether it was popular or not, that he should preach it; whether people were opposed to him, or disagreed with the truth of the word, that he must be willing to suffer their opposition or disapproval, perhaps even for quite a long time, in order that those whom he was preaching to, might be won to the truth. He reminds Timothy in chapter 3, verse 10 that Timothy had carefully followed his manner of life, which included his having seen Paul exercise this grace of longsuffering; even while under persecution for the truth’s sake. Paul had endured many persecutions in many of the cities where he preached, but the Lord had stood by him and had delivered him out of them all. Let us remember this blessed reality ourselves; that the Lord Himself is with us when we are faithful to the word. Even though evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, we do not need to cave in to their tactics. We need to convince, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering.

And then, in closing, let’s turn to Ephesians 4: 1. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity

of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” What Paul is pleading for, with the church at Ephesus, and what he is pleading for, with us as well, is that we should walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called. What does this mean? It means that they should walk worthy of that effectual call which God gave to them by His working in their hearts. God has changed every believer by giving them a New Heart. They did not deserve to have received it; it was His gift to them in accordance with the preaching of the word of God and His eternal purpose in Christ. They were now receiving grace; not simply unmerited favor, but also the precious imparted grace which teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and causes them to want to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present evil age. To walk worthy is to live in a way worthy of that grace which has been bestowed, at such a great cost to Christ. Practically this means that we as Christians will be humble, and not self-asserting, but meek and gentle; and we will be longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. Let us strive to attain to what we have been called to in this grace of longsuffering.