

The Patience of Jesus

John 11:1-57

A husband had the habit of sitting in the car impatiently waiting for his wife and four children. After one particular family Christmas party, the wife announced to her husband that she was going to go sit in the car and honk the horn while he helped their four children with their coats.

We are an impatient people. The Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines impatience as an unwillingness to wait for something or someone; wanting or eager to do something without waiting; showing that you do not want to wait.

That pretty well captures the essence of how we feel when we sit in the waiting room for a doctor's appointment and wonder how much longer before we are seen or once we get into the examination room how much longer it will be before the doctor opens the door. We're impatient in the grocery store checkout, even the 10 items or less line, or when we are stuck in traffic or in the fast-food drive through.

How often do we get impatient while sitting at a stop light. AAA has estimated that if you begin driving at the age of 15 and drive until you are 65, you will have spent over 2,900 hours waiting at stop lights. That doesn't even account for the time spent traveling through construction zones.

It's been estimated that people wait approximately 20 months of their lives waiting for a spouse or children to get ready.

We live in a culture that always seems to be in a hurry. You have heard the slogan that a watched pot never boils, implying that it seems to take longer if we are standing there. Regular oatmeal took too long so they came up with oatmeal that cooks in two minutes, but you still must wait for the water to boil. That was too long so they came up with instant oatmeal. Now microwaves aren't fast enough. I knew someone who couldn't even wait to heat up a can of baked beans and ate them cold.

One article suggests the following reasons some people are more apt to become impatient:

People who tend to get angry quickly lack patience.

People with a short attention span tend to get impatient faster.

Any delay makes people impatient.

When others don't keep a promise people get impatient.

People become impatient when they are around others who don't move as fast as they would like.

People become impatient when a task they are doing is going slower than they want or when there are obstacles which lead to frustration or anger.

People can become impatient when they don't get what they think they deserve as fast as they think it should come, like a promotion.

As you might expect, the Bible has some things to say about impatience.

Proverbs 14:29 "Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly."

Proverbs 16:32 "Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city."

In our series of looking at some of the character traits of Jesus, we turn today to His attribute of patience. The passage we are looking at today, does not specifically speak to patience, but within the text we see that it suggests the correlation between patience and other attributes in how He relates to people.

Before looking at the passage in **John 11**, let's first consider a definition of patience.

I. PATIENCE DEFINED

What is patience? The dictionary defines patience as a person's ability to wait something out or endure something that is tedious, without getting riled up. Other sources commonly define it as the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. We might hear

someone say “that person has the patience of Job.” The word patience comes from the Latin word **patentia** which means suffering. From it we get our word patient referring to someone suffering from being sick or injured. As a noun it refers to a person. As an adjective it refers to the character trait of bearing under or enduring pain or trouble; refusing to be provoked or angered by someone who may insult us; calmly tolerating delay, confusion, or inefficiency.

While those are general definitions and we may well understand what they mean, the New Testament provides us with two words that are translated patient. But while similar in meaning there are differences in our understanding of what they refer to in the Bible.

Now, you just learned a Latin word, so let me give you the two Greek words so you can impress your friends by telling them you are trilingual.

The first is **hupomonay**. It means to remain under. It’s used specifically when you are undergoing some kind of burden or trial or trouble. It refers to a steadfastness we have when we are in difficult circumstances. It’s the kind of patience James refers to when he writes that believers are to **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete (whole), not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-3)**

Your translation may have the word patience instead of perseverance, which is defined as the ability to keep going no matter the obstacles. To bear under.

James continues in **verse 12** that the man who is patient in trials will be blessed because he has persevered through the test. He says that person will receive the crown of life.

Luke records Jesus using this word when He stated that **“by standing firm (being patient) you will gain life.” (Luke 21:19)**

Paul tells the Romans to be **“patient in affliction.”**

(Romans 12:12)

He also tells us to be patient in our service of the gospel.

II Corinthians 6:4

II Corinthians 12:12

II Timothy 3:10

Another translation of **hupomonay** is to endure, as when we are told to endure chastisement by God. **“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.” (Hebrews 12:7)**

I Peter 2:20 speaks of patiently enduring undeserved affliction. **“For what glory is it if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”**

Jesus says in **Luke 8:15** that we must be patient in bearing fruit, likening the production of a crop to bearing spiritual fruit. In other words, both take time, it’s not going to happen overnight.

There are two things I look forward to in the summer besides warm weather and they have to do with food. Corn on the cob and a nice bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich with tomatoes fresh from the garden, but I have to wait until they’re ready. It takes time for them to grow and ripen.

And then, the writer of Hebrews tells us that we need to run the race of life patiently. (**Heb. 12:1**) Spiritual maturity doesn’t happen overnight. It’s a long process.

In **James 5:10-11**, James cites Job as our example of someone who patiently endured under severe trials. But the idea conveyed by James is one of perseverance. There were times in his response to the attacks of his three friends where he called on God to vindicate him right then. But even though God didn’t come to Job’s defense right then, through it all he kept going, kept persevering.

Psalm 30:5 **“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”** That says to me that our trials are only temporary, so hang in there, be patient and endure through it. God will see you

through it. That's why trusting God and patiently waiting on Him is so paramount to our faith and the ability to endure those hardships. God has a plan and we need to trust Him through it. (**Prov. 3:5-6**)

All this suggests that the Greek word *hupomonay* meaning to abide under and translated as patience, perseverance and endurance refers to being steadfast under difficult circumstances and implies a steady faith in God's purpose. *Hupomonay* refers to being patient in respect to circumstances. **Are we willing to patiently trust God and His plan for us in our troubles?**

The second word translated patience is *makrothumia* and refers to patience in respect to people. It is the word Paul uses in **Galatians 5:22** to say that this patience is a fruit of the Spirit. It comes from two words *macros* meaning "long" and *thumos* meaning "passion" or "temper". Together it means to be *long-tempered*. The KJV translates the word *longsuffering*. In other words, a person with this kind of patience has the ability to hold his temper for a long time. We might describe this person as having a very long fuse, that it takes a lot to get this person riled up. Again, this is not in respect to circumstances, but in relation to people. This person can endure a lot of pain and suffering at the hands of others without complaining or seeking retaliation or holding a grudge. They are slow to get angry as they wait for God to bring comfort to them or take action against the wrongdoer.

According to **Galatians 5:22**, this kind of patience is only possible through the Holy Spirit who seeks to develop this character fruit in us. The ability to be patient with others is only through the empowering work of the Spirit in us.

This kind of patience brings self-restraint. It's the kind of self-restraint a friend of mine told me about when she rode a racehorse that was boarded at her stables. As she rode the horse, she could feel the powerful muscles tense up because it wanted to run, but restrained itself from what it wanted to do. That is power or in this case, patience under control. When we are otherwise ready to unleash on someone for what they had said about us or done to

us, we instead restrain ourselves through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

On the other hand, a person who loses his patience shows a sign of weakness in character and an unwillingness to submit to the work of God's Spirit. Showing patience is a sign of compassion toward the other person even though they inflict some emotional or physical pain or trial on us. **Are we willing to patiently trust God and His plan for us in respect to how people treat us? Are we patient in circumstances and patient with people?**

As we look at Jesus, we see in the Gospels that He exhibited both types of patience. He patiently endured a tremendous amount of pain and suffering especially during the beatings at His trial and the physical and emotional pain He experienced on the cross. But He was also very patient with people as we see from **John 11**. Let's take a look, then, at patience demonstrated.

II. PATIENCE DEMONSTRATED

As we consider this passage, I want to reference a passage that is the overarching principle here. It's found in what we call the love chapter of the Bible. **I Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient."**

Patience is therefore a by-product or result of love. We might say it like this: without love or more specifically without the love of Christ developed in us by His Spirit, we won't have patience. If we aren't patient with others, we aren't letting His love grow in us. Where there is Christ-like love, there is Christ-like patience.

Look at **verses 1-6**. First of all, patience is for our good.

A. Jesus's Patience Is For Our Good

Beyond the disciples, Jesus had some special friends: a brother and his two sisters – Lazarus, Mary and Martha. We learn that Lazarus is sick. We also learn that Mary is the one who poured perfume on Jesus's feet and wiped them dry with her hair. She had a great affection for Jesus and demonstrated it in a sacrificial way. Elsewhere in

the gospels we learn that Jesus and His disciples had shared a meal in their home when Martha was impatient with her sister because she wasn't helping prepare the meal but instead sat and listened to Jesus's teaching.

John adds an important note for his readers that Jesus loved these three. Because of their mutual affection for one another, they notified Jesus that Lazarus, **"the one you love,"** was sick. Now one would expect that such affection would prompt someone in that kind of relationship to drop what they are doing that there would be an urgency about responding to the news and head over for a visit. Instead, we read that Jesus waited two days longer before taking action.

Delays have a purpose. There is something that God wants to teach us in our time of waiting, in our delays. We don't like delays because it keeps us from doing something else we want or feel the need to do. Waiting goes against our need for instant gratification or deliverance. Waiting puts us behind.

But waiting builds confident trust and faith in God that He has a plan for our good. Isn't that what **Romans 8:28** teaches us. **"And we know that all things (even our delays) work together for good them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."** Jesus waited.

So, do you love God enough to patiently wait?

Psalm 27:14 "Wait for the Lord: be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

How many of us have prayed and wanted God to answer right away and God seemed silent and so we wait wondering if God heard or if He'll answer? Martha and Mary were impatient.

Robyn and I are praying about something that we want God to answer right now, but it's not His plan for right now and so we must wait and trust Him.

Maybe you are praying for something and you're waiting on God. Are you patiently waiting on the Lord or are you pacing or thumping your fingers on the desk hoping He'll hurry up? The Psalmist tells

us to be strong and take heart, rest patiently on God. **Psalm 25:3 "No one who waits for the Lord will be put to shame."**

Lamentations 3:25 "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him."

Isaiah 30:18 "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him!"

Isaiah 40:31 "But those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint."

King David was someone who experienced the pain of troubles and attack from people. He writes about the difficulties and distress they caused and found strength in God when he wrote: **"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."** (Psalm 37:7)

Even when he feared for his life he could write: **"We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name."** (Psalm 33:20-21)

Psalm 40:1 "I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry."

Again, what are you going through right now, what are you praying for? Find strength and faith in your waiting from Paul's instructions in **Romans 8:25-26** **"But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."**

Now if the group of disciples was anything like the typical church, they would have gathered around at prayer meeting and prayed for their friend, added him to the prayer sheet, made phone calls to get the prayer chain going and those are all the right things to do. Patiently waiting in prayer produces faith, which we see in **verse 14** from what Jesus says that

it also helps strengthen our belief.

Patience is for our good because it builds trust and faith in God. It helps us mature in our spiritual walk. It gives us hope and confidence in God's working all things out for our good through His perfect plan.

Can we be patient and gain strength in our waiting on God through what seems to be delays?

So why does the Lord make us wait? It's not only for our good, Jesus tells us that it's for God's glory.

B. Jesus's Patience Is For God's Glory – v. 4

After two days, Jesus told the disciples that it was time to go to Bethany and pay a visit. Jesus not only explains that patience is housed in love, but tells us the reason or the why of patience. Notice the twofold reason found in **verse 4**. **“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.”**

Think of it this way, our impatience can rob God of the glory He would otherwise have received. Had Jesus gone right away to see Lazarus while he was still sick and healed him, which He could have done without even going to visit His friend, He would not have been able to demonstrate something even greater than His ability to heal someone, which He had done on many other occasions. God would not have received the glory through the greater miracle that Jesus ultimately performed. The people mourning with Mary and Martha would not have seen His ability to raise someone from the dead.

Whenever God works in us or through us in delays, it is for His glory.

In this case with the disciples and in fact all the people who were there, He wanted them to grow in their belief of Him so that God would get the glory.

Verse 41-42 “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me, I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me.”

In the case of Mary and Martha, He wanted to teach them that He was the resurrection and the life, again

for the glory of God.

And the glory of God would be seen not only in the resurrection of Lazarus, but ultimately in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It was part of the Father's plan for Jesus to wait until the right time in which He would offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. When the religious leaders heard about the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, they began to plot how they could murder Him.

There is one more demonstration of Jesus's patience and it comes from the words of the religious leaders.

C. Jesus's Patience Is For Our Glorification – v. 48

“If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him...”

The Lord displays incredible patience with us because His ultimate desire is that we be saved and experience glorification when we join Him for eternity in heaven.

II Peter 3:9 “God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

I Timothy 1:15-16 “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.”

If you do not know Christ as your Savior, He is patiently waiting for you to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to repent as Paul did, and believe on Jesus Christ to be saved.

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals He's waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me.

Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
Pleading for you and for me?

Why should we linger and heed not His mercies,
Mercies for you and for me?

Come home; come home.
 You who are weary come home.
 Earnestly, tenderly Jesus is calling,
 Calling, "O sinner, come home!"

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Jesus showed incredible restraint and patience when people ridiculed Him, spoke against Him, beat Him, rejected Him, and crucified Him. He could have called on legions of angels to deliver Him, but He didn't because He patiently waits for people to believe on Him, to trust Him as Savior. His patience through all He endured means the opportunity for us to be saved, for us to be made right with God, for us to be glorified. And for that we not only owe Him our very lives and our thanks, He deserves our praise.

Isaiah 30:18 "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him!"

Our patience is for our good and God's glory.
 Jesus's patience is for our good and God's glory.
 His example is our model in displaying patience.

III. PATIENCE DISPLAYED

There's a humorous little poem that says:

Patience is a virtue,
 Possess it if you can.
 Found seldom in a woman,
 Never in a man.

We chuckle at that, but the reality is that true patience isn't in any of us without the work of God's Spirit. Chuck Swindoll once wrote that "true patience is waiting without worrying."

Are we displaying the patience of Jesus in our trials and with other people?

Can we trust the Lord by patiently waiting on Him?
 Often times God's purposes for us take time. His plan is perfect. **So can we trust Him in the waiting or like Abraham do we tend to try and move God's plan along?**

As we wait patiently for God, are we taking time to seek Him?

Psalm 40:1 "I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry."

Along with that time of waiting patiently and seeking God, are we looking to Him in prayer or are we leaning on our own understanding? If it's the latter, it's a lack of trust on our part, a heart of unbelief that God will act on our behalf.

As we wait patiently for God, is it with confident expectation in God's greater plan for our good and good of others?

Waiting patiently on the Lord not only develops our faith, it displays to others a testimony of confident trust in God that His purpose and plans are worth the wait.

As you wait patiently for the Lord, you receive His blessing.

Isaiah 64:4 "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides You, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him."

Jesus demonstrates what patience looks like. We have been given the Holy Spirit to develop that patience in our lives each day. As you pray to have that patience, be prepared to experience trials from various circumstances and trials from others to help you develop His character of patience.

Wayne Grudem concludes that "as most attributes of God that we are to imitate in our lives, patience requires a moment by moment trust in God to fulfill His promises and purposes in our lives."

If you have yet to respond to the patient calling of Jesus to trust Him, today is the day to come home.

How will you respond?