

The Fruit of Patience



Fruit of the Spirit (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. All this week I've been sharing with you about the precious fruit of the Holy Spirit. In my last three talks, I've dealt with the fruit of love, the fruit of joy, and the fruit of peace.

Today, I'm going to speak about the fruit of patience. Patience includes two distinct, but related aspects of character. The first is steadfastness in enduring troubles, the second is slowness in avenging wrongs. I want to say that again. The first aspect of patience is steadfastness in enduring trouble. The second aspect is slowness in avenging wrongs. Without both of these aspects, patience is incomplete. Some people are steadfast in enduring troubles, but are very quick to avenge themselves. Some people are slow to avenge themselves, but not very steadfast in enduring trouble. To have true, scriptural patience—the complete fruit of the Spirit—you have to combine both of these things: Steadfastness in enduring trouble, slowness in avenging wrong.

We must understand that the way into God's kingdom is through man's tribulations. This is specifically stated in Scripture. At one point in their ministry, Paul and Silas went through the cities where there were new disciples who had come to the Lord through their ministry, disciples who had been under pressure and persecution, and it says of what Paul and Silas were doing: Acts 14:22:

> "[They were] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'"

Note that word "must." Why the "must?" Why "must" we go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God? What is it that tribulation does for us that makes it necessary? Well, I would answer this: Tribulation, or trouble, or pressure—whatever word you want to use—is necessary to work out in us the benefits of the death of Jesus on our behalf. What Jesus did on the cross, He did once for all. It never has to be redone. It's a complete and perfect work. But it is not worked out in our lives in just one momentary experience. It's a continuing process of working it out in our lives the benefits procured for us by the death of Jesus on

the cross. And tribulation is one of the factors in working out these benefits. Let me state it this way: On the cross, Jesus died to sin on our behalf. Therefore, we are to reckon His death as our death. This is stated in Romans 6:10 & 11.

> "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin…" In just the same way that Jesus died on the cross, consider yourselves to be dead, because His death was your death. So that's an accomplished fact and we can reckon immediately we come to realize it.

However, reckoning it is one thing. Working it out in daily living is another. So Paul says in Colossians 3:5, speaking to Christians:

> "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

We're reckoning ourselves dead, but to make it effective we have to put to death those things in our lives which are the expression of the old unregenerate nature. Now patience is the aspect of character which is produced in us by doing this—it's what's produced in us by experientially working out in our lives the death of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus died to sin. The aim of God is that we should be dead to sin. This is received by faith but it is worked out in experience. Working it out in experience demands patience. Without patience we cannot enter into the fullness of the provision of God which He's made for us through the death of Jesus on the cross.

In acquiring patience, Jesus has set the pattern for us. This is stated very clearly in 1 Peter 2:20–23. Peter is speaking primarily to people who are in the position of slaves under masters. But the principle goes far further than just the slave/master relationship. The principle applies to all of us who are believers. He says this:

> "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. [Notice that what God wants in us is that even when we're unjustly treated, punished when we should not be punished, we patiently endure it. That is what God is looking for. The next statement that follows is very remarkable.] For you have been called for this purpose… [For what purpose? To patiently endure wrong doing and unjust treatment. Lots of Christians, who speak about being called to do various exciting things, don't mention the fact that we've been called for this purpose also. Then Peter goes on to say:] since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow: [So we are clearly required to follow the example of Jesus in enduring suffering. Now his example is stated in verses 22 & 23] Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [He was entirely innocent. He didn't deserve any of the suffering that came upon Him. But it says:] And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

The way which Jesus responded to unjust treatment and suffering arose from His confidence in the Father. He was prepared to entrust His case to the Father and not fight for Himself. So He endured mistreatment—wrong doing, false accusation, rejection—patiently without fighting back, because He trusted His Father to work it all out on His behalf. This is patience. When we have achieved patience, we renounce the desire to justify ourselves or to revenge ourselves. As long as we are busy justifying ourselves or revenging ourselves when we are wrongly accused or unfairly treated, we have not yet achieved the fruit of patience.

Peter goes on again in the same vein in 1 Peter 4:1 & 2:

> "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, So as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

That's a remarkable statement there—"He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Having ceased from sin, he is no longer the slave of sin and he is free to live the rest of his time in the flesh, not to the lusts of man, but to the will of God." You see, the essential thing is being dead to sin. The provision that we might be dead to sin was made through the death of Jesus, but the working out of it in our experience demands patience; and without patience we do not achieve it.

What does it mean to be dead to sin? I would suggest you could express it this way. When you are dead to sin, sin has

no more power over you, sin has no more attraction for you, and sin produces no more reaction from you. I think that's progressive. I know believers over whom sin no longer has power. They are not driven to sin by the pressures, but it still attracts them. There's a desire in them that isn't dead. I know other more mature believers over whom sin has no power and for whom sin has no attraction, but it still produces some reaction from them. For instance, if somebody speaks evil of you, there's something in you that rises up and wants to smite him—if not with your fist, at least with your tongue; but when you are truly dead to sin, then there's no more reaction. And then you are free to live the rest of your life to the will of God.

What's the key to this patience? I suggest to you that its found in keeping your eyes on Jesus. Listen to Hebrews 12:1–3:

> "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, [that's the great believers of the Old Testament] let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, [that's the key] the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Jesus knew that the only way to joy is through suffering. Keeping His eye on the joy that lay before Him He endured the suffering. And our key to this is to keep our eyes on Jesus and to follow where He has led.

All right, our time is up for today, but I'll be back with you again at this time next week—Monday through Friday. Next week, I'll be dealing with the remaining five forms of the fruit of the Spirit—that is, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

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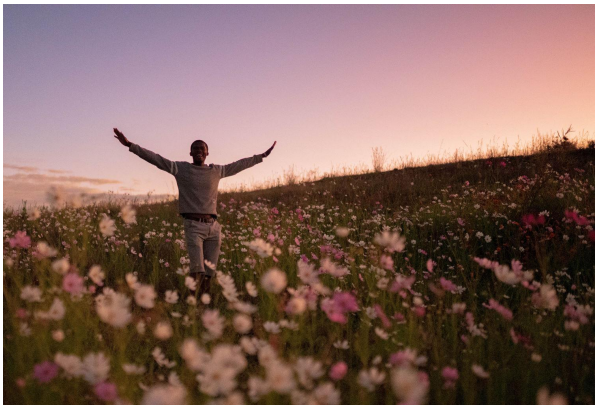

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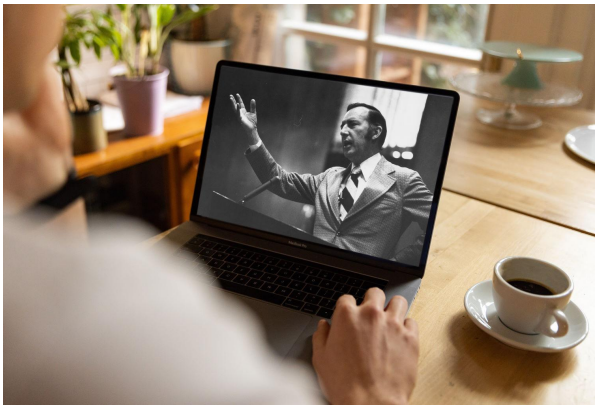

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