



## **I NEED PATIENCE, NOW!!!!**

Patience is something that is required at every stage of our lives – whether we are dealing with little ones, or teenagers, or husbands, or bosses, or parents, or ourselves. It's a topic that is relevant and will be relevant for the rest of our lives! I'm still growing as God continues to teach me more and more about patience toward myself and others. I hope I can give you some things to think about that will help you to grow and become more patient. And you may learn a new way of looking at impatience in order to get there!

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

That is our focus text, but I want us to back up to where Paul introduces his subject.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

Paul is talking about the struggle that we have as followers of Jesus to surrender our lives to His direction and let Him control us instead of letting SELF or "the flesh" be in charge. Some Christians talk about "Who's on the throne of your life?" or "Who's in the control tower?" or "Who's calling the shots in your life?" or basically, "Who has the right to tell me what to do?"

Much of the book of Romans deals with this struggle. Will I surrender to Jesus' direction and do things His way, or will I live my life with SELF in charge. That's a really basic question. One choice leads to the fruit listed in Galatians 5 and the other leads to pain and messes. We are given the freedom to choose.

A few years ago, I was living in California and was in the back yard with my little grandson. You need to know that my son, and his wife, and their two young children had just left after a 10-day visit. At the time, my son's family lived across the country from us, and we only got to see them once or twice a year. My heart was heavy, not only because I was missing my precious grandchildren, but also because I had seen what I considered to be some problems in my son and his wife's parenting skills. There were things that I wanted to say to him. I was struggling to know how to pray and asking God if I should speak up and address some of the parenting issues. Now, I was supposed to be watching my youngest grandson, who was currently living with us. I looked up just in time to see him standing on tippy toes trying to reach a small green orange growing on one of the lower branches of an orange tree. I rushed over and said, "Oh, baby, don't pull the little green ball. If you pull it off, then it will never become all that God intended for it. But if you'll leave it alone, then when it gets ripe, we'll both enjoy it."

And in that instant, I knew that God had spoken to me. I knew how to pray for my son and his wife. I knew that I needed to be patient and let them grow in their own way and in their own time if I wanted to enjoy the harvest in the future. God also showed me very clearly the price I would pay for impatience. There are serious consequences. Impatience causes pain and scars and even death to relationships and dreams. If we become impatient, we'll never see what God had intended.

When I realized that God had spoken to me through that incident, I went back and secretly picked the green orange. I kept it on my desk to watch it – because I wanted it to remind me that impatience comes with a high price. The orange began to shrivel and harden. Soon the green faded to an ugly, blotchy brown and became rock hard and very, very small.

In December, I went out to the same tree and picked a huge, fully-ripe, beautiful orange orange. I wanted to compare the two and see the difference. It tasted wonderful and was well worth the wait! Don't pick the fruit before God has finished growing it. With time and nourishment, it will grow and become all that He intended. And we'll all enjoy the fruit when it's ripe.



It's so easy to look at others and become impatient. Many of us have been wounded by premature judgments made on us. And many of us are dealing with the guilt of making premature impatient judgments on others. Maybe you are dealing with impatient judgments you've made on yourself.

As we look at patience, let's talk about those areas that require patience. What are they? Our children, our spouse, our siblings, our friends, our parents, our pets, co-workers, neighbors, and let's not forget ourselves. We need patience and we need it NOW!

I fear that often we try to fix impatience by being more patient. Now, that sounds logical. I'll just BE more patient. But how's that working for you? I want to show you that that's not found in the Bible.

Scripture makes it very clear; we cannot fix what's broken inside of us. But I'm here to give you good news. God can!

As you ran errands yesterday or drove to work, did you notice a little light on your car dashboard that said "low fuel?" What do we need to do when that little annoying light comes on? Does anyone drive to a car mechanic and say, "Take this light bulb out – it's annoying me. I don't want it telling me what to do." No? But that would solve the problem, wouldn't it? No!

What do you do when the little beep on your telephone indicates a low battery? Do you disable the beeper? No, of course not.

We all know that those are important indicators of some problem that needs to be addressed and the problem IS NOT THE INDICATOR.

But how many times spiritually, we simply try to remove the indicator light instead of addressing the problem. The Bible states clearly that the issue is whether we will allow God to direct our lives or our SELF. If we allow Him, we'll see fruit. If we allow SELF – we'll see the opposite of that fruit. So, if we allow Him to guide us, we'll see patience and if we allow SELF to guide us, we'll see impatience. Therefore, impatience is an indicator light that tells us that our control center has been corrupted. We are no longer operating according to God's will and direction in our life. Turning off the indicator light will NOT correct the problem.

Let's look at an example and see if it aids our understanding. Let's picture a 2-year-old in the "me-do-it" stage. That will try your patience! Or maybe it's a 7-year-old day dreamer that doesn't move at your speed. But let's look at it deeper. When I am becoming impatient because they are doing things "their way," I've got to realize that I'm standing here stewing because I want them to do it "**my way**"! Where is my submission to God in that? What would God have me to do? If I'm listening to SELF, then I will be impatient. But if I'm listening to God's direction, I will be able to show love, and care, and possibly even discipline in a kind and respectful manner. What a difference it makes! It took me years to realize that *if I'm doing things His way – there is no such thing as impatience!!!!* Impatience only rears its ugly head when I'm not submitting to my Father and doing things **His way**.

Whenever I see impatience, my job is to bring it before my Lord, and look at it together. I discover that at the root of the problem – without fail – every time – it's ME. It's ME wanting what ME wants when ME wants it.

And God's Word says that when we are listening to SELF, He has given us some clear indicator lights that will help us get back on track. But they won't get us back on track if we just try to cover them over or take out the light bulb. It won't work.

When I was raising pre-teens, the book, Parenting Adolescents, by Kevin Huggins, really impacted my life. He states that most of us think of ourselves as grown-ups who are raising our children and teaching them how to grow up. But Mr. Huggins states that God is the parent, and He is growing **us**. One way he does that is by placing a child in our care – not primarily for the child's benefit -- but for **ours**! Even as we introduce this next generation and help them to grow, God is growing us, and He's not finished with me or you, yet!

Maybe it's not a child, maybe it's a neighbor, or friend, or boss – but the same truth applies. God places people and situations in our life to help us grow. It's very humbling to realize that God was using my almost two-year-old grandson to help me grow.

I've never found indicator lights that say, "Good job, your gas tank is full." Or "Thank you for recharging my battery." But God gives us positive indicator lights when we surrender to Him, seeking His will and direction, and being obedient. Those indicator lights are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

Paul also wrote in Romans that everything the Jewish people had experienced from the beginning of creation was designed by God to convince them they needed a Savior, a Messiah. I believe that God is saying to us: I've placed people around you to convince you that You need my help today.

So, my challenge to you is to look at your indicator lights. Do you see patience? Do you see impatience?

Walking in patience is a lifelong journey. There will always be a new person or circumstance that will upset our lives, our schedules, our plans. Will we be followers who walk according to the Holy Spirit's direction? It's your choice to face these constant battles with the power of the Holy Spirit or to deal with them in your own way. If you chose to do it God's way, you will increasingly see amazing fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

In His service,  
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