

Patience for the Long Haul

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Scripture Reading: James 5:7-20, Joel 2:23, Matthew 5:33-37, Hebrews 11:32-40, 1 Peter 4:7-11

When I see the word “patience” listed in Galatians 5, along with the other fruit of the Spirit, I groan. I’m reading happily along with love, joy, and peace, and then... patience. *Ugh.*

I know I’m not patient. Watch me try to fold a fitted sheet. But patience, as talked about in the Bible, is much more than remaining calm in the midst of fitted-sheet frustration.

Take the new believers in the book of James as an example. These people were Jews recently converted to Christianity. Because of their new beliefs, they were rejected by their own people. They were persecuted by everyone around them, and James tells them to do *what?*

“You also must be patient.”

– James 5:8

The Greek word often used for patience in Scripture is *makrothumeo*, which means... well, it means words that make me uncomfortable, such as:

Longsuffering

Slowness in avenging wrongs

Steadfastness

Forbearance.

Patience is much deeper than something you practice when someone is hogging the bathroom. **Patience—the longsuffering kind of patience—is something that arises when real trial strikes.**

A few months ago, my own longsuffering was tested. I wish I could tell you I turned to God, fully trusting Him during this dark time, but no. Instead, I shook my fist, and I shook it hard. I was angry at God, and I tried desperately to escape the anxiety and darkness by my own means.

You could say I was the opposite of longsuffering. I was short-suffering, tiny-suffering, *microscopic*-suffering. I realized in those few months that my pain threshold is nearly

nonexistent and, even still, I know most of you reading this have weathered much worse.

My life was not bearing the fruit of patience because somewhere deep down inside of me I didn't trust my God. And somewhere even deeper inside of me, I had lost hope and convinced myself I was alone.

But there's an amazing thing about the word longsuffering in the New Testament: it is almost always an instruction given in the context of *hope*.

Romans 8 says, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. . . We ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (vv. 22-23).

And in Galatians 6:9, we're told, "So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up."

We groan. But we don't give up. Better still, we do not wait without hope!

We do not wait in vain. We wait for our God—the God who has promised *and secured* our full redemption through Jesus Christ.

May we do the same for each other in the face of our trials. Let's practice longsuffering together. Let's look at our lives with an eye to that glorious day in the future when suffering is but a long, forgotten memory of this earth.