

Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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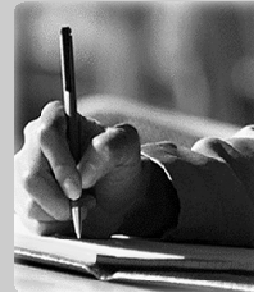


HG114: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season
PATIENCE: Love's Endurance

James 5:7-12

Home Group Study Notes

1 November 2015 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Now that the euphoria of the Rugby Union World Cup is finally over (thankfully for many) discuss whether Christians should, or shouldn't, be involved in professional sport.



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Does patience come easily to you? What gets you angry? (Go on, be honest!)

2: In James 2:7-11, James cites some examples of patience from the Bible. Can you think of any other examples of patience from the Bible? What examples have been the most helpful to you in your Christian journey?

3: The word patience isn't found a lot in the Bible. Using a concordance, or similar, look up verses that include the word patience/endurance and share any verses that especially speak to you.

5) Patience in Practise

Bruce Almighty is one of my favourite films, but the follow up *Evan Almighty* is another wonderful film with some great Christian truths. The story is that God tells Evan to build an Ark but his wife is deeply concerned about Evan because he has grown a beard and is wearing strange clothes as well as building an Ark and so she starts to pray that God will do something. In this clip, God is disguised as a waiter, and gives her an explanation:

Let me ask you something. If someone prays for patience, you think God gives them patience? Or does he give them the opportunity to be patient? If he prayed for courage, does God give him courage, or does he give him opportunities to be courageous? If someone prayed for the family to be closer, do you think God zaps them with warm fuzzy feelings, or does he give them opportunities to love each other?

In all my prayers, whether I get answers I want or not, I can count on this one fact: God can make use of whatever happens in my life because He is sovereign and, because he has a purpose for my life. And we can be sure, wherever we may find ourselves that it is a good plan.

Sometimes God says yes; sometimes he says wait; and sometimes he says no - but these are all answers to prayer, aren't they? Only, no and wait are the answers we don't want to hear! There is no need to panic or to be afraid that we cannot work our problems out, because God can drastically change the situation. He is that kind of a God - as many of us know for ourselves.

So, how might we put patience into practise?

First, we thank God for our circumstances. A person's first reaction is usually "Why me?", but the Bible says to rejoice in God's will (Philippians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:6).

Second, we seek His purposes. Sometimes God puts us in difficult situations so that we can be a witness. Other times, He might allow a trial for sanctification of character. Remembering that His purpose is for our growth and His glory will help us in the trial.

Third, we remember His promises such as Romans 8:28, which tells us that "all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." The "all things" include the things that try our patience.

The Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him forever and ever in the next.
Amen.*

And, because of that, we don't live in the present moment and we can lose the sense of perspective that the spontaneity of the Spirit brings our way. Evelyn Underhill: *God is always coming to you in the sacrament of the present moment. Meet and receive him there with gratitude.*

4) Developing Patience

Have you ever reached the point where your faith seems to be draining away? Have you ever thought to yourself: *'I'm so weary of being a Christian?'* I have. In fact, these past twelve months I've felt very weary of being Team rector with all that has been going on with the Team Review, colleagues moving on and Dan's appointment as a Pioneer Minister. I'm not the only one! They are a lot of weary pilgrims around, those who've been really 'long tempered' as James said we should be, but are really struggling. And so, if you are feeling a little bit like that, James gives us this next bit of advice: strengthen your relationship with the Lord.

He says this in vs8a: *'Stand firm.'* We are to develop an inner sense of stability. We are to patiently strengthen ourselves against the sin and temptation and trials of the world, and we can do this by strengthening our hearts. To strengthen our hearts is to strengthen our relationship with the Lord. There are three ways this can be done:

1. *Strengthening your hearts requires prayer.*
2. *Strengthening your hearts requires the study of God's word.*
3. *Strengthening your heart requires fellowship with other Christians - not just church, home groups are as good a place as any.*

But you don't really need patience when everything around you is going all right. You need it when life is hard. The Bible often talks about tribulation working patience in us. Suffering and patience seem to go hand in hand. What do we usually do when we begin to feel the heat? We complain to anyone who'll listen. We lash out at others because of the pressure we are feeling. Impatience with our circumstances leads to impatience with God, which in turn leads to impatience with God's people. *"To walk in love the saints above, will be a wondrous glory; But to walk below with the folks we know, well that's another story."*

Although most people consider patience to be a passive waiting or gentle tolerance, most of the Greek words translated "patience" in the New Testament are active, robust words. Consider, for example, Hebrews 12:1: *"Therefore since we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"* (NKJV).

Do we run a race by passively waiting for the slow-coaches to catch up? Not usually. The word 'patience' in this verse means "endurance." A Christian runs the race patiently by persevering through difficulties. In the Bible, patience is persevering towards a goal, enduring trials, or expectantly waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. Patience does not develop overnight. God's power and goodness are crucial to the development of patience. Colossians 1:11 tells us that we are strengthened by Him to "great endurance and patience," while James 1:3-4 encourages us to know that trials are His way of perfecting our patience. Our patience is further developed and strengthened by resting in God's perfect will and timing.

Nadia's Testimony: Many of you will know that Nadia was Baptised and Confirmed by Bishop John on 18 October. To say Nadia has been on a journey these past few years is a bit of an understatement. Nadia has endured through good times and bad, but has found her peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. I thought it would be good to give Nadia an opportunity to share with us this morning something of her journey of faith - it seems to fit our theme of patient endurance pretty well.

4: Have you found yourself, quite unexpectedly and unwillingly, as Evelyn Underhill suggests, living *in the sacrament of the present moment*? Share your experience with your group.

5: Some people suggest that it's wrong to pray for patience because it can start a series of events that can test us to the limit. Share an example where the Lord taught you patience through a testing experience and where you've found your faith strengthened?

6: Share situations where you need an extra dose of God's patience to deal with a difficult situation and pray for each other and pray *The Serenity Prayer* together.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG114: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season **PATIENCE: Love's Endurance**

James 5:7-12

Home Group Sermon Notes

1 November 2015 - Revd Paul A. Carr

1) What is Patience?

A man in Los Angeles, California was arrested, recently, for negligently discharging a weapon after shooting his toilet bowl five times with a .38 calibre handgun. He claims that he got upset and couldn't take it any longer. The reason? His daughter had flushed a hairbrush down the 'loo' earlier in the day and clogged the pipes. So he shot the 'offending toilet.' Just as well he didn't shoot the 'offending' daughter isn't it!

Well, you know what they say, don't you: "*Patience is a virtue, possess it if you can. Seldom found in a woman, never in a man.*"

Henri Nouwen: *A waiting person is a patient person. The word patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us.*"

Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is a characteristic of God's Spirit living within us. As such, it is one of those things that should set the believer apart from the world. Perhaps we might hear the Lord speak to us about patience in our own lives today, that is, if we are not in too much of a hurry to get out of here. Well, if that is so, maybe we ought to begin by asking the question, "What is patience?" Let me give you some definitions.

1. *Patience is self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate against a wrong.*
2. *Patience is the ability to accept delay or disappointment graciously.*
3. *Patience is the powerful attribute that enables a man or woman to remain steadfast under strain and continue pressing on.*
4. *Patience is a calm endurance based on the certain knowledge that God is in control.*

The word patience comes to us from the combination of two Greek words (*makros*) which means "far away" and (*thumos*) which means "anger, heat or rage." Be patient (*makrothumia*) in Greek means, literally, "long tempered." Or to have a 'long fuse'!

Is patience difficult for you? Do you have it in abundance or short supply? It seems to me there is always something to try our patience. We wait in traffic and we wait in queues. We wait for our children to grow into responsible adults - long wait! Every day of our life presents many opportunities for training in patience. We can accept it, resent it, and even become good at it! But one thing is certain - we can't avoid it. And that's because patience doesn't come easily. It seems there's always a price to pay. We've all experienced the hurt of mistreatment and misunderstanding; intolerable work situations; domestic conflicts; difficult relatives; people who take advantage of us; friends (so called) who turn against us; neighbours who test us to the limit ...

Our natural tendency is to retaliate, to return evil for evil, to get even, or to hold a grudge and become bitter. But James' first command to us, vs7, is to be patient.

2) Examples of Patience.

Suffering is a key theme for James. In fact, he started off his letter by saying, 1:2: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.* And he went on to explain that trials and suffering can mature our faith. Through the fires of difficulty, God refines us to be more like him. James uses a few examples of patience:

The Farmer (vs7): James gives a classic illustration of patience when he says ... *see how the farmer waits.* The farmer is patient because the value of the harvest justifies the wait. When the seed is planted and everything is done in the initial stage, he doesn't go off and retire. He is busy working in another area of the farm, patiently waiting for the time of harvest.

The Prophets (vs10): James points us to the prophets: as an example of patience in the face of suffering. Abraham, too, waited patiently and received what was promised (Hebrews 6:15).

Job (vs11): *You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.* Job was blessed above every other man of his day. He was prosperous and it seemed he had everything his heart desired. Then suddenly, it all changed. He lost his property, his possessions, his family and his health. Job didn't understand what was happening, or why? But he knew his life was in God's hands. In the face of unexplained suffering Job is an amazing model of endurance under tremendous testing.

Jesus is our model in all things and He demonstrated patient endurance: *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.* (Hebrews 12:2).

3) Living in the Present Moment.

Our culture is built upon the latest, the most modern, and the disposable. We are a society built upon instant credit; instant food and instant gratification. So much energy seems to be channelled into getting more. *I want it, and I want it NOW!* I'm sure we've all heard the expression; *I want patience - and I want it NOW!* So often, we find ourselves in a hurry, only to find out that God isn't!

Remember the story of Jairus in Mark 5? Jairus' daughter was unwell and he falls at Jesus' feet and: *'Pleaded earnestly with Jesus: 'My daughter is dying' - my little daughter is dying Jesus.'* And between the muffled sobs, he begs: *'Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.'*

However, on the way to Jairus' house, Jesus is pursued by a crowd of people and then, would you believe it, Jesus stops will not budge until he finds out who has touched him! Touched him! *'Why there is a whole crowd of people touching you Jesus - my daughter is dying and all you can be bothered about is who touched you.'* And then Jesus finds out it is woman who has been healed by this touch after twelve years of spending all her money of doctors to find a cure, he decides to have a conversation with this woman! Can you imagine the intense agony of that interruption for Jairus? This is beyond irritating - it is almost irresponsible. The clock is ticking and Jesus is talking! I guess Jairus' patience was tested to the limit!

We are all guilty of living life by our diary and our next appointment and when interruptions to our routine can be unwelcome.