

Week 5 | Patience

July 24 – July 30

Monday, July 24 | The Patience of the Lord

Read 2 Peter 3:3–15

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Reflect

In our modern Western context, patience is most typically associated with waiting in line or dealing with children. Ask 10 people about patience and see which image they mention first! We consider patience a virtue exercised when we are able to endure annoyance or delay without complaint. But in the New Testament, the Greek word most often translated “patience”—*makrothymōs*—carries more weight and length. It means long-suffering or long-spirited—endurance not just in the grocery line, but over a long period of time as a way of bearing a burden of some kind. And there is no better example of this long-suffering than God Himself. As Peter explains in this beautiful passage of Scripture, God’s heart is burdened for His creation. He longs for everyone to turn to Him in repentance so He can pour out His grace and forgiveness. Though we may feel too much time has passed since Jesus walked the earth and want Him to return, ushering in the kingdom of God in all its fullness, He waits, exercising patience—long-suffering, a long-spiritedness—so that all will come to know Him.

- Who comes to mind for you when you think about a patient person? Identity three to five qualities about that person you have noticed. In other words, what is it about them that made them come to mind in the context of patience?
- What invitation related to patience do you sense God is extending to you? Take a few minutes in silence to listen to God. (Is He inviting you to exercise more patience in a particular arena of your life? Or perhaps with a particular person or set of circumstances? Is He seeking to lovingly point out the ways in which you haven't exercised patience recently? Something else?)

Respond

God, thank You for Your long-suffering and long-spiritedness toward me. You have been so patient with me as I seek to know You more and follow in Your ways. Thank You for pursuing me with Your grace and love and for waiting as I ran from You and put other things before You. There are people in my life who need Your patience. Continue to wait, Lord, in Your great mercy, so they can come to know Your love, Your life, and Your forgiveness. Amen.

Tuesday, July 25 | Patience in Suffering

Read James 5:7–11

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Reflect

Yesterday we read about God's patience. We used the words "long-suffering" and "long-spirited." As the apostle Peter said in the passage we read yesterday, God is not slow in keeping His promise that Jesus will return, but rather, He is patient because of His desire for everyone to repent and receive His grace and forgiveness. As James instructs us in today's passage, we are called to be patient in our lives on this earth, where things are not as they should be, as we wait for Jesus' return. How do we bear the burden and weight of this world? We hold onto hope as the farmer does, waiting for each harvest. We refrain from taking out our frustration and fear on each other. We persevere even in the face of violence, destruction, and uncertainty.

- Reflect for a couple of minutes on the burdens you are carrying because the world is not as it should be—maybe those burdens related to things in your own life or family or work; maybe

they relate to tragedies in the country or the world. What does patience in the midst of whatever you identified look like?

- What are some ways you have taken (or continue to take) out your frustration, fear, or uncertainty on other people? Is there anyone from whom you need to seek forgiveness?

Respond

God, the tragedy and despair in this world can be so overwhelming. As I read or watch the news, there is so much pain, destruction, and suffering. I long for Your return, Jesus. And yet, I long for every person to come to know You and put their trust in You. Fill me with patience—the patience that allows me to endure over a long period of time. May I be a light to those who don't yet know You and focus not on what's wrong, but on how I can continue to encourage and build up others for Your sake. Amen.

Wednesday, July 26 | Wait With Patience

Read Romans 8:22–28

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 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. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Reflect

In chapter eight of his letter to the Romans, Paul focuses on what it means to live life in step with the Holy Spirit, and contrasts that life with one lived according to the flesh—our selfish, self-serving desires. Life in the Spirit, Paul says, is true life and freedom. It is living as a beloved child of God. Life in the Spirit means that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and makes our deep longings known to God. Life in the Spirit means that God will work for our good. And in today's passage in particular, Paul tells us that life in the Spirit helps us wait patiently for Jesus to return, for God's kingdom to come fully and finally, and for the pain of this world to end. The Spirit reminds us of the hope we have in God's promises, faithfulness, and unending love. When our hearts and minds are fixed on this hope, we can live with patience and focus on the work God has given us to do.

- What are the longings over which your soul groans? (For example, maybe it's a desire to belong or be loved, for something in your marriage or family to be healed, for a disease or illness to be cured, or for an addiction to be broken.)
- What are three or four things you know to be true about God (even if just from today's passage alone)?

Respond

Hold whatever you identified in response to the first question above in one hand (metaphorically) and in the other, hold whatever you identified in response to the second question. Pray that the Holy Spirit would remind you of the hope you have in God because of what you know to be true about Him and that He would fill you with patience in the midst of your longings.

Thursday, July 27 | Clothe Yourself With Patience

Read Colossians 3:12–14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Reflect

Clothing ourselves with actual clothes is a daily activity. So is clothing ourselves in patience (and compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness). Most of us are not naturally patient, particularly when we are tired, under stress, worried, fearful, or in a hurry. Just like with the other fruit of the Spirit, the only way to be patient (with the help of the Holy Spirit) is to practice patience—to be intentional about putting it on each day and reflecting back on how it went.

- In what situations or under what circumstances do you tend to be the most impatient? What happens in your mind and heart when you are impatient? What impact does it have on your family or friends?
- What would it mean in your life to put on patience each morning? What might you pray? Who might you talk to and invite into your patience practice?

Respond

God, help me to model patience wherever I am. Give me the grace to wear it throughout the day, and to practice it in situations where I might otherwise feel impatient. When I am tired, under stress, worried, or fearful, grant me Your perspective, wisdom, and energy. Help me to go beyond myself and to act in conjunction with Your Spirit. Amen.

Friday, July 28 | Waiting Patiently for the Lord

Read Psalm 40:1–3

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.

Reflect

We all face situations that we seem to be unable to find our way out of, whether through perseverance or discipline or hard work. And many of us have found (or will find) ourselves in the midst of circumstances we simply cannot navigate on our own. There is no discernable way out, no clear path. We are stuck, and no amount of work on our part can set us free. This is certainly true in the most ultimate sense—when it comes to our salvation, we cannot save ourselves from death; we are utterly reliant upon Jesus Christ to save us. But it is also true in the less-eternal sense. It could be illness or a loss of some kind. It could be a sin pattern or addiction. It could be something we have ourselves caused or something someone else has foisted upon us. Today's passage is an expression of relief, joy, and praise that we follow and serve a God who can save us in the eternal and non-eternal ways. Our job is simple, but not easy: trust and wait patiently.

- Reflect on a time when you were in the midst of a situation you could not find your way out of on your own. What were the circumstances? What was the outcome? After reflecting on those things, try praying Psalm 40 to God based on your own experience.
- If you are in the midst of circumstances now that you can't navigate your way out of, spend a few minutes reflecting on what trusting God would look like in those circumstances. Similarly, what would waiting patiently on God's help look like?

Respond

If God has brought you through something recently, pray Psalm 40 as your prayer.

If you are in the midst of a struggle now and can't find your way out, pray:

God, I need Your help. Here I am, my heart and hands are open. Help me. I am here and cannot find my way out. Show me how to trust You, how to turn this over to You and wait for Your

deliverance. Bring me through this and set my feet on firm ground. Fill me with gratitude and patience that You, the Creator of all things, would see me and intervene in my life. Here I am, Lord. Help me. Amen.

Saturday, July 29 | What Patience Looks Like

Read Luke 8:40–48

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

Reflect & Respond

- Read through today's passage two or three times, slowly, noticing what stands out. Remembering you are in God's loving presence, pray that He would show you how the particular words or phrases that stood out apply to your life right now. Pray that God would give you insight, wisdom, and courage, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, to act as He's calling you.

Sunday, July 30 | We Wait in Hope

Read today's psalm as your prayer.

Psalm 33

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Praise the Lord with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.

For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.

The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord;
let all the people of the world revere him.

For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

The Lord foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people he chose for his inheritance.

From heaven the Lord looks down
and sees all mankind;
from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth—
he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do.

No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.

A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.

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.

May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,
even as we put our hope in you.

A Way to Cultivate Patience This Week

Silence is a valuable spiritual discipline in our exceedingly noisy world. Because it involves relinquishing control and waiting on the Lord, silence can help cultivate patience. This week, will you try this spiritual discipline? Carve out 10 minutes each day for silence. Don't bring an agenda into this time.

- Set a timer for 10 minutes to avoid being distracted by time.
- Take a deep breath and remember God is closer than the air you breathe.
- As best you can, quiet both your internal and external noise and simply rest in God's holy and loving presence.
- When your mind wanders (because your mind *will* wander), don't be harsh with yourself. Gently return your attention to God.