

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

October 2016

No. 370

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT: LONGSUFFERING

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

Next in our list of the fruits of the Spirit is longsuffering.

Longsuffering is the first in the section of the fruits that are about our relationship with the people around us. I get a chuckle every time I think of this, that the first quality in this section is patience!

What is longsuffering? To summarize a few definitions, longsuffering literally means “long-tempered,” and it is the quality

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141 County Road 474

Woodland, AL 36280

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of self-restraint in the middle of a situation that might provoke hostility or retaliation. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy and a slowness in avenging wrongs.

What does it look like? In the Old Testament, we have a great example of longsuffering in the life of King David, a “man after God’s own heart.” On more than one occasion Saul tried to kill David. Still, even though David had opportunities, he would not take vengeance on Saul. In other examples, God was patient with mankind in the days of Noah, and in his dealings with the nation of Israel. Fortunately He is patient with us today (Rom. 2:4).

Some personal examples:

A few years back we bought horses, but we never had them at our house. Either my in-laws or my parents took care of them on their land. Oh, the horses were fun and I trained them and we rode them...some. But every day they needed to be fed. Every day they needed their water bucket filled up. Every day they pulled up the grass and their feet cut into the soil. Every day they left evidence of their presence, and it often smelled. No one ever complained about doing this work for us, and both sets of parents were always glad to see us come to see the horses.

Alzheimer’s disease is terrible, and it has affected relatives and loved ones all around our family. It’s hard not be frustrated when a person afflicted with this illness asks the same questions over and over, but I’ve seen so many primary caregivers smile and continue to show love.

I’ve had plenty of trials in over a decade of managing people at work. Once, enough of my staff fought against me that my superiors got involved. These leaders showed great patience, and they openly supported me. As it was all happening, I felt just like the man in Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant. I tried to model the patience that was given to me and, in time, the storm passed.

We have young children. Need I say more?

Why do we need to be longsuffering?

I just mentioned Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-35). It doesn't paint a very pretty picture for those who aren't patient!

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matt. 18:32-35)

If God is patient with us, then we, as his children, should be patient with others (Col. 3:12-13). How else can we maintain unity? Longsuffering is especially important for preachers and teachers, because many will not want to hear the message. Notice all that Paul taught Timothy about this:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. (2 Tim. 3:10-11)

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Tim. 4:2)

We need to develop this fruit of the Spirit to be useful for service, and to ensure that God is patient with us.

Which brings us to a fork the road -- there are those who know of patience, and those who practice it.

How can we develop this virtue?

The short answer is love, the first virtue in the Fruits of the Spirit. In the famous passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says that “*love suffers long.*” Unless we love those who have wronged us, we simply won’t be motivated to be patient with them.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

Prayer is also part of the answer. In Colossians 1:9-11 Paul tells how he prays for the full development of this virtue. We can ask for it for ourselves, and we can ask for it for others!

If we want to receive God’s patience, if we want to be useful in His service, if we want to be able to teach and influence, if we want to enjoy peace and unity in any and all relationships, then we need longsuffering. To grow in this, we first need to grow in love toward everyone, especially those who rub us the wrong way. We also need to pray for longsuffering, both for ourselves and for others.

Jesus said we should bear fruit that others can see (John 15:8), but we don’t bear fruit to be seen. We shouldn’t look for big, outward actions that can get us attention. Insincerity can be spotted a mile away. Instead, we should develop who we are as Christians, as people with deep character, and this fruit won’t go unnoticed.

CHAD PRINCE
(Oxford, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month’s questions?

1. Which man killed a lion with his bare hands? SAMSON
(Judges 14:5-6)
2. Who became nurse to Ruth’s son? NAOMI (Ruth 4:16)
3. Which king took possession of Naboth’s vineyard? AHAB
(1 Kings 21:16)

4. Jesus was a high priest after the order of which ancient king, mentioned in Psalm 110? MELCHIZEDEK (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:5-6)
 5. Which missionary was described as having “known the holy scriptures from an early age”? TIMOTHY (2 Timothy 3:15)
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“SHINING AS LIGHTS”

This should be a concern to any thoughtful member of the Church: how quickly our society is changing clearly for the worse. We are living in a “post-Christian culture”. The old norms once held true are no longer accepted by the majority. For example: people as a majority once believed in God, that the Bible was God’s Word, and that Jesus was his son; however, this is no longer the case. The majority no longer accepts certain basic principles of morality taught in the Bible, even ridiculing those who do as “old fashioned” and “un-enlightened”. The fact that we live in this “post-Christian culture” is evident both socially and religiously. Socially, in that the majority of people do not want to hear that social drinking, gambling, divorce and remarriage, co-habitation, and homosexuality as an “alternative lifestyle” is against God’s Word. Religiously, the women’s role as church leadership, homosexual ministers, and various forms of “new age” religions are now accepted by many.

How are Christians to react to this change in our society? Should we form political action committees, resort to boycotts and/or picketing? Should we resort to violence, both verbal and physical? What can we do to protect ourselves and our children? Should we isolate ourselves or form communes? I believe the scriptures provide the correct answers in a letter by Paul to a Church who, like many in the New Testament times, lived in a “pre-Christian culture”. Paul’s letter to the Philippians was written to Christians living in a city heavily influenced by the Roman culture, with paganism, intellectualism and immorality; what Paul wrote to them is very likely the sort of things he would write today, especially the things mentioned in Philippians 2:12-16. This passage provides guidance

for the Church member living “*in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*”, whether then or now. It provides directions, hope, and warnings which will help us to “*shine as lights in the world*”.

Working out our own salvation first. As Jesus put it, we need to get our own life straight first (Matt. 7:1-5). This passage is often misused to prevent any proper judging, but its real emphasis is in fact getting our act together first. Notice that once we have removed the beam from our eye, we then should help remove the mote in another’s eye. If we are not careful, we may lose our salvation in the way we react to others. Paul saw the need to be careful when trying to save others (1 Cor. 9:27). We must shine as lights in the world to help others to salvation.

With fear and trembling. The word “fear” in connection with God is not popular today. People prefer to hear about God’s love, longsuffering, and mercy. Sometimes when we point out God’s righteous indignation, holiness, and justice, people reply: “My God is not like that!” The emphasis on God’s love and mercy is often a reaction to the fact people want to live their life as they see fit, being good people in society’s eyes -- a feel-good religion, if you will. The actual fear is to fear God’s judgement on our souls if we are found outside of his Word of truth. God is to be feared above all else -- not man or beast. We are to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). Without proper fear and trembling people are very unlikely to take God seriously in working out our own salvation. Could this be the reason for such apathy and fruitlessness in the Church today? Yes, God loves man but He is also man’s righteous judge in the end.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God’s harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

The Harvester

141 County Road 474 * Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221 * Email: raymcmamus@hotmail.com

Web Page: www.churches-of-christ.org

By letting God work in us. To succeed as lights of the world it will be essential to let God do His work, something He is able to do beyond our ability to comprehend (Eph. 3:20-21). He is there working in us if we allow him to: “will” = helping us in our motivation, to “do” = helping us in our ability (Php. 1:6; 2:13). But if we are not careful, we can easily quench God’s efforts to work in us and prevent God from using us altogether or at least for doing things for our own good. Yes, there is power from God to help us to shine as lights in the world, if we keep his Word in our life. As Paul tells us, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Php. 4:13).

Without murmuring and disputing. We must maintain a positive attitude. Living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation can easily get us down, where we can become constant complainers. If we allow this to happen, we can become less effective. As with Israel, murmuring can lead to our downfall (1 Cor. 10:10-12). Unity among the brethren is extremely important as we try to convince the world concerning Jesus (John 17:20-23). Disputing with one another simply reveals we have some growing up to do (1 Cor. 3:1-4). If the body of Christ is going to influence the world the way it should, it cannot be devouring itself through such destructive forces like murmuring and disputing among themselves. This is not to say that the Church should allow anything unscriptural to enter in. We are to reprove and rebuke according to the Word.

As children without fault. We have a requirement that we should become blameless. We are to be above reproach. We may be sinners, but we quickly confess our sins and repent when it’s called for. We should live in such a way that we have no outstanding faults that are clearly evident to others. Nothing hinders our ability to shine as lights like inconsistency and hypocrisy, especially that which is evident to all. We are also required to be harmless. Though we may firmly oppose sin in all forms, those outside the Church should never fear bodily harm from us (2 Tim. 2:24-26). We are to be as Jesus said in Matthew 10:16, “*wise as serpents and harmless as doves*”.

Holding fast the Word of life. Remember the Word of

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
October 3 - 7	Home of Myrtle Thornton Summit, MS	J.D. McDonald & Timothy Lewis For more information call 601-276-2962 or 601-248-6587
October 3 - 5	Hopkinsville Hopkinsville, OH	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 7 - 9	Delventa Beattyville, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 21 - 23	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Donald Thompson & Tim Eldridge
October 28 - 30	Verona Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

God is the “Sword of the Spirit”. The Word is the only offensive weapon given in the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17). The Word is the instrument by which the spirit convicts the world of sin, produces repentance, and brings about the new birth (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Romans 1:16). Thus it is truly the “Word of Life”. We must hold forth this powerful Word in our own study and application and as we proclaim it to those we are trying to change. We would do well to follow the example of Ezra and the order in which he applied himself (Ezra 7:10); first seek the Law of the Lord, then do it, and finally teach others.

In these verses, I believe we find the way Christians are to “*Shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.*” Our ultimate objective is to change the hearts of men to God’s way. This is how Christians will “*rejoice in the day of Christ*” and know our labor will not be in vain.

GREGG MOORE
(Roanoke, AL)