

# Patience | Dan Greene

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[0:00] Good morning. Okay. Open to James 5. If you weren't here last year, I was asked to come and speak on the fruit of the Spirit.

! And when I got into studying to come, I realized I couldn't cover all the fruit of the Spirit. So I only covered the first three, which is love, joy, and peace.

I was kind of thankful I didn't get to the fourth one, which is patience, because I'm not very good at that. But as it turned out, you asked me to come back.

So we're going to deal with that today. I made you wait a year to hear this, which probably gave you some relief last time.

You know, when you think about it, we spend a lot of time waiting. Remember when you were young, you couldn't wait to get into school?

[1:05] Then you couldn't wait to get out of school? You couldn't wait to fall in love? You couldn't wait to get married? You couldn't wait to have kids?

Then you couldn't wait until they got out of the house? We spend a lot of time waiting. And many things test our patience.

Traffic jams? A fast food restaurant with a slow drive-thru? Stuck zippers?

Irritating people? Flight delays? I expected something this time that would be an illustration, but it didn't happen. But last time, last year when I came, the pilot came on and proudly announced that we had a lot of wind behind us.

And so we were probably going to get here probably earlier than we anticipated. And sure enough, he was bragging as we were landing that we were 20 minutes early and he had saved us time.

[2:13] And I was like, yes! And then he got on the tarmac and he goes, well, because we're early, we don't have a gate. So we're going to have to wait for that gate.

I thought, that's life. You have to wait at doctor's offices. That's why they call us patients. Are you patient?

When you grab a couple things in your hands at Schnucks and you go up to the 10 item or less aisle and there's a lady in front of you with a full basket full of groceries, does your blood pressure go up?

And then when you get to the checkout lane and it says credit card only and she pulls out her checkbook and starts writing the check.

Now I'm going to be honest up front. This is a convicting topic for me because I don't like to wait. I never go to stores to take back gifts the week after Christmas.

[3:24] I wait till February. When I come up to a busy street, like a four lane street with traffic running fast both ways, and I'm coming up from a side street and there's two cars getting ready to turn left.

You know what I do? I turn right. Because I would rather be moving in the wrong direction than sitting still and waiting for somebody else.

One of my pet peeves, it's probably beyond a pet peeve, is left lane drivers.

Thank you. I want to scream at them and say, it's the passing lane, not the picnic lane.

And that's when I understand road rage and that's when I'm thankful I don't carry a concealed weapon. Being patient is especially difficult when I'm hungry.

[4:34] I can relate to the preschooler who was asked by her mother, would you like an ice cream sundae? And she said, no, I want one today.

You ever notice that the more expensive the restaurant, the more they make you wait? You wait for the, you wait to get seated. You wait for a menu.

You wait to order. You wait for your food. And then you wait for the bill. And they call him the waiter. He's not waiting on me.

I'm waiting on him. Now, whoever first said patience is a virtue must have been reading James. Because as soon as we, as I looked at patience and the fruit of the spirit, I was drawn to this passage. James chapter 5, verses 7 to 11. And in these five verses, the word patience or endurance is used six times.

[5:38] In fact, the whole book of James is really about patience. Remember how James chapter 1 starts out? It says, consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces what?

Patience. Patience. And then when I teach the book of James, I use as an outline, chapter 1, verse 19, where James says, be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

That's really the formula for patience. Patience. And then as he closes out the book here in chapter 5 and verse 7, he says, therefore, be patient.

Now, patience comes from two Greek words. One of the words means long. And the other word means fuse or temper.

So to be patient is to have a long fuse. It's to be able to be in the midst of the heat without igniting.

[6:44] Someone has said it's letting your engine idle when you feel like stripping the gears. And patience is not a secondary issue.

We like to write it off and laugh about it and say, well, let's, you know, I'm just not patient, but that's acceptable among Christians. But it's not an option. In 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the first three verses, Paul pounds us with the truth that if you don't have love, you're zero.

If you don't have love, you're zero. And then he describes love beginning in verse 4, and what's the first characteristic of love? Love is patience. So if you don't have patience, you don't have love.

And if you don't have love, you're zero. That's not an option. What's the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy. We usually say love, joy, peace, and so forth. But the first characteristic in that so forth, the first fruit in that so forth, is patience.

[7:58] So you can't say, I'm very Christ-like. I'm just not patient. You can't say, I'm very loving.

I'm just not patient. You can't say, I'm spirit-filled, but I'm just not patient. No. We pointed out last year that this word fruit in Galatians 5 is singular.

So you don't get to pick and choose the fruits. It's fruit. And you get all the characteristics of the fruit. That's why I say the fruit, don't think of an apple. Think of an orange.

It's one fruit with all these sections. So you don't pick and choose. Because you either have the fruit of the Spirit or you don't. And one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit is patience.

And so it's not optional. It's mandatory. Now, I want us to look at these five verses in James.

[9:04] And I find that James answers three questions about patience here. And we're going to look at them this morning. Number one question is when, the second is why, and the third is how.

When do you need patience? Why do you need patience? And how do you show patience? Okay? First is when do you need patience? And James uses three illustrations in this passage, which I love.

The first is in verse 7, and that's a farmer. The second is in verse 10, the prophets. And the third is in verse 11, and that's Job.

So he uses three illustrations here, and those three illustrations point to when you need patience.

The first is the farmer.

And the farmer describes a situation for us when you have to be patient in uncontrollable circumstances. Look at verse 7.

[10:07] Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it until it gets the early and late rain.

Now, don't go into farming unless you're patient. Farmers have to do a lot of waiting. They wait to plow.

They wait to plant. They wait to prune. They wait to harvest. But there's one thing that a farmer has absolutely no control over, and that's the rain.

And this was written in the first century when they didn't have elaborate irrigation systems. And so he was totally dependent upon something he could not control, and that is the rain.

Now, to set the stage, in Palestine, the summer months are very dry. The ground gets baked and hard. And in about October, November, they get the first rains.

[11:06] And those rains kind of revive the parched, thirsty earth and soften the soil. And that's when the farmer can go out and plow it up and plant the seed. And then it rains off and on throughout the winter.

And then in about March, they get the late rains. And they refresh and ripen the crops. And when that rain ends, the farmer can harvest the crop.

You see, a farmer banks his life on circumstances he has no control over. In fact, if a farmer just can't wait, he can't survive.

They have a title for farmers who are not patient, and that is ex-farmer. Now, with that illustration, let me ask you a question.

Are you facing uncontrollable circumstances in your life? Are there some things that just can't happen unless God brings his showers of blessing?

[12:09] And if you can't think of any, let me remind you, how about your next breath? You have no control over that. How about your next doctor's appointment?

How about your safety when you drive home from camp? How about your job security? How about the salvation of your family members or friends?

See, most of life, when we're honest, is out of our control. And you can either worry or you can wait. So the first time when you need patience is uncontrollable circumstances. The second is illustrated by the prophets, and that is unchangeable people. Look at verse 10.

As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Now, what was the job of the prophets?

[13:15] They were to tell people to repent. Tell people to turn around. Tell people to turn back to God. And instead of listening to the prophets, they resisted that change.

And rather than heeding the messenger, they killed the messenger. And that's why the common denominator among the prophets was, according to verse 10, suffering.

Ahab and Jezebel sought the life of Elijah. Daniel ended up in the lion's den. Jeremiah was beaten and thrown into prison. Do you have unchangeable people in your life?

If they're in the room, don't look at them. Might be your husband, your kids, your boss, your in-laws, your neighbors.

James is writing this letter to a people who really understood unchangeable people. Because he starts the letter writing out to those who are scattered throughout because of the persecution they got in Jerusalem.

[14:25] And in the end of this chapter, he writes, well, actually, in chapter 2 and verse 6, he says this. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

And so the church at that time was very poor because they had been scattered abroad. And they were persecuted by the rich. In fact, if you look at chapter 5, the first verse says, come now you rich, weep and howl.

And throughout this book, whenever he mentions the rich, it's always in a negative way. And so he tells the rich to weep and howl. And then when you come to verse 5, where our passage is, he says, therefore be patient, brethren.

And then he says again in verse 9, brethren. Verse 10, brethren. And so they were a persecuted people. They had unchangeable people around them.

A story came out of Hebrew tradition, a fictitious story, by the way, but it was told in Hebrew culture about Abraham, that he was sitting outside his tent one day.

[15:31] And an old man came up to him in the evening, and he invited the old man to join him in dinner. And so he came in, washed his feet, made him food and drink.

And the old man immediately began eating without saying a prayer of blessing. And so Abraham said to him, don't you worship God? And the old man said, no, I worship fire.

I don't revere your God. And so Abraham got incensed, grabbed the man, threw him out into the cold night. And later God asked Abraham where the stranger went.

And Abraham answered, I threw him out because he doesn't worship you. And God said, though he dishonors me, I have patiently put up with him for 80 years.

Could you not put up with him for one night? And that's really the perspective of patience when we come to unchangeable people.

[16:39] Third is unexplainable problems. And that's taught by Job. Look at verse 11. You have heard of the endurance of Job.

Now Job played the Super Bowl of suffering. And I don't need to explain it all to you today. But in one day, he went bankrupt. All his children died.

And he got an incurable disease. In one day. And we think we've got problems. But the worst part was that Job had absolutely no idea why it was happening.

Now we get to read the book of Job and see behind the scenes the curtains pulled back and we see God and Satan at work in that situation. Job had access to none of that. So the worst part for Job was he was suffering and he didn't know why.

In fact, when you read the book of Job, you might pay attention to the fact that God didn't even speak to him for 37 chapters. And yet he endured through it all.

[17:51] I didn't realize some of you didn't know this, but I... On May 2nd of this year, my youngest son had a motorcycle accident.

And it was a bad one. He actually died on the scene and they resuscitated him and got him to the hospital in Columbia.

And he was in a coma for six weeks. And... On... Sorry.

Sorry. On June 16th, he passed away.

When those things happen in our lives, we don't always get answers. We're left wondering why.

And that's still fresh, obviously, for me.

[18:58] And God hasn't sent me a text telling me why this is happening. Job was in that situation. He lost everything. And it was one of those unexplainable problems.

Do you have those today? Problems in your life when you have lots of answers... Or lots of questions and no answers? You need the patience of Job.

Let's move to the second question. Why? Why should you be patient? Now, I find, especially as a pastor, it's easy for me to find the reasons why other people should be patient.

You know, I can pull them out and say, here's why you ought to be patient. But when it's happening to me, I tend to find excuses for why I can be impatient.

James gives us three reasons why we ought to be patient. The first is this. God is in control. God is in control.

[20:11] Three times in this passage, James tells us the Lord is coming. In verse 7, verse 8, and again in verse 9.

And that's what we as Christians are ultimately waiting for. That is the ultimate proof that God is in control when Jesus comes back. And I know it's corny to say this, but his story is his story.

He's in control. He's got it all planned out. Everything is on schedule. And it's moving toward that ultimate climax when the Lord Jesus returns.

So whether you've got uncontrollable circumstances or unchangeable people or unexplainable problems, you can relax and breathe and trust God because he's in control.

God's purpose for your life is greater than any problem you're facing. And don't miss this. Since God is in control, when I'm impatient, who am I being impatient with?

[21:33] Ouch. God's in control. God's in control. So when I'm impatient, who am I being impatient with? God.

Philip Brooks, the famous preacher from New England, was pacing back and forth in his office one day. And somebody walked by his door and looked in and saw him and said, What's wrong, Pastor? And he said, I'm in a hurry and God isn't. Have you been there? That's when you have to, again, slow down.

Be patient. Because God is in control. See, a lot of the situations in life, in fact, let me say this, most of the situations in life are out of my control.

But there is not one situation in my life that is out of God's control. And mark this down. God is never late.

[22:47] Second reason. God is in control. Secondly, God is at work. Suppose I still lived in Missouri and I told you I'm going home after this weekend.

And I'm going to plant bulbs about six inches down in the ground in my yard. So I'm going to have some beautiful Easter flowers. And suppose I added this, that every day I'm going to dig them up to see if they're growing.

What would you say to me? You would say, you need to be patient. Because, see, if you're patient, behind the scenes, you can't see it, but behind the scenes, God is at work to produce a beautiful flower.

Well, the same holds true for your life and my life. God is at work to produce something very special.

And he adds just the right amount of trials and just the right amount of encouragement. The early rain. And he adds the late rain.

[24:03] And we need to be patient because he's growing something very special. And that is he's growing you and I into the image of Jesus Christ.

I don't get this gender reveal stuff that goes on today. You know, you go out and you have a big party and you get a pink or blue and it's going to be a boy and everybody says, congratulations, you got a boy.

Well, you haven't done anything yet to be congratulated for. Well, you've done something. How did I get into that? Okay. You see, it takes nine months in the womb to produce a baby.

And I'm told it takes a lot of pain to deliver that baby. And it takes a whole lot of blood, sweat, and tears to raise a child to be an adult.

If that's true of a physical baby and child, why should it be any different spiritually? It takes time.

[25:13] And we have to be patient with the process because God is at work. Look at verse 10. As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Now, the prophets suffered a lot. And at times, I'm sure they were wondering, why is God putting us through this? He called me to be a prophet. I've gone out and spoken his word and now I'm being persecuted.

I'm suffering. And I'm sure they had lots of questions. In fact, Elijah, if you read about his life, got to the point at one point in his life where he was actually suicidal because his life was so difficult.

The writer of Hebrews describes Samuel and the prophets this way, excuse me, at the end of Hebrews 11. He says, They were tortured. They experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were tempted. They were put to death with a sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

[26:22] They were outcasts. They didn't get into the who's who of their day. But notice what it says in verse 11 immediately after this.

It says, We count those blessed who endure. We look back on these same guys who suffered and we applaud them. They are honored in our sight.

We count them blessed. And what's that tell us? It tells us that hindsight brings insight. And that's always the way it is with trials.

You can always see the purpose of trials better when you're looking back on them. You have to go through them with patience. And then when you get through them, you can look back and see what God is doing.

I've been through a lot of trials in my life, and I won't catalog those for you. But having gone through trials, I lost the life of my first wife. And so going through that and learning from that prepared me to lose my son.

[27:29] Because I realized God's at work. And God's going to work in this in a positive way. And even when I can't see what he's doing, I know he's at work.

And that's so important to learn and trust and understand. Just because your hands are tied doesn't mean God's are.

And when you are waiting, please know, when you are waiting, God is working. I don't know what problems you're encountering today. Probably we could all walk up here and share.

And there's some difficult situations going on in everybody's life. I don't know. It might be financial, emotional, physical. Whatever it is, God is at work.

So be patient. Most common expression for the Christian life in the New Testament is walk. Sometimes I wish it was run, leap.

[28:37] You know, it's walk. Which means a steady, step-by-step-by-step process that God's taken us through. And we can't speed that up.

We have to be patient and stay at the pace that God wants us to be at. And what was the outcome in Job's life?

Remember? Did you notice it in this verse? Verse 11. Verse 11. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job. And have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings.

That the Lord is full of compassion and merciful. Even Job, with all his suffering, now we look back. And we see the outcome of that. We see that God was at work.

What did God do for Job? Well, he blessed him. After going through the trials, Job knew God in a new way.

[29:42] In Job 42, I love the phrase where Job says, I have heard of you with the hearing of the ear. But now my eyes see you.

What's that say? I used to hear about you. I used to know about you. I used to be able to preach about you. But now my eyes see you.

New relationship with the Lord. And that's better than anything in life. And not only that, but God doubled everything for Job.

When you read chapter 43, he gave him twice as much as he had before. Twice as many herds. Twice as many sheep. Twice as many camels.

Twice as many... I don't even know what herds are. So I'm a city boy. But you know what's interesting? And people often ask me this. Job lost his ten kids in the first chapter.

[30:46] And then in chapter 43, he gave him the same number back. Ten. And people often ask me, why didn't he double his kids?

And I say he did. Because there's ten in heaven and ten on earth. You see, you don't lose your kids. They go to be with the Lord.

And I think that's an important principle, at least for me in my situation, to understand today. It pays to be patient. Now the third question, how?

I don't see a clock anywhere. So I have no idea what's going on here. Let me get a Kleenex. What, you guys got me crying now?

I don't know what's going on. Okay, well I'll just, I'll just keep talking until you start leaving. When half of you are gone, I'll close it down.

[31:48] How do you show patience? And James gives us three ways. The first is we're to wait expectantly. We're to wait like a farmer.

Now how does a farmer wait? Well, does he sit in his house and sit on his blessed assurance? No. Farmers are hard workers. So when a farmer's waiting, he's also working. He's out in the field removing stones.

He's plowing. He's sowing. He's removing the weeds. He's pruning. He's preparing for that later rain.

He's preparing for that harvest that he's trusting that God's going to provide. So listen, don't miss this. Being patient doesn't mean being passive.

[32:51] Please get that. Being patient doesn't mean being passive. I've discovered at times that when I'm waiting on the Lord, he's actually waiting on me to get ready for what he wants to do.

So let me ask you this. What are you praying for? And if God answers that, are you ready? If the later rain came today, are you ready for the harvest? And personally, if Jesus came back today, are you ready? Where to wait expectantly? Secondly, where to wait quietly? Now what's the natural reaction when someone mistreats you? It's revenge.

It's retaliation. It's I'm going to get even. Frederick Nietzsche said, revenge is the greatest instinct in the human race. George Byron called revenge sweetness.

[34:06] Francis Bacon said, revenge is a sort of wild justice. God said, vengeance is mine.

So, revenge isn't even in your job description. Our job is to show patience. Chuck Swindoll tells of the time he got out of his car in a parking lot and accidentally opened his door into the car next to him.

He got out and looked to see that there was no scratch. And then he noticed that there was a man sitting in the car next to him. So he said, I'm sorry about that.

And the man said, that's okay. So Swindoll started across the parking lot and as he was going into the store, he noticed that everyone was looking back in the direction of his car.

And so he turned around to see the man slamming his door repeatedly into Swindoll's car. He says, my first instinct was to retaliate.

[35:20] But then he could imagine the headlines, pastor kills man in parking lot. Or worse, man kills pastor in parking lot.

But you know what? Even when we refrain ourselves from retaliating physically, we often retaliate verbally, right?

I didn't do anything, but I sure said a lot about that person. Look at verse 9. Interesting. Verse 9. Do not complain, brethren, against one another so that you yourselves may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing right at the door. Why does he have a do not complain right in the middle of this passage about patience? patience. Well, because when we tend to find our patience, we keep our mouth open.

And we're to be patient quietly. It's hard to be quiet when you're frustrated. Because you want everyone else to know about it. So we moan and groan and grumble.

[36:35] I'm waiting, but I'm sure going to complain the whole time. Some people wake up every day and rise and whine. They hit the ground griping.

Their dog tired because they growled all day. It's so common when we go through trials to want to complain.

I wouldn't be going through this if it wasn't for her. Or why is he not going through the trials I'm going through? And James here reminds us that the judge is at the door.

I like that analogy. The judge is at the door. The judge is at the door. That should motivate us to stop complaining.

Hang on a second. That seems out of place. Okay. Never mind. All right.

[37:44] I'm going to make an excuse. I got up at 3 a.m. yesterday morning. So. No. Kidding. Actually, I have a, I was going to use Joseph as an illustration.

Because Joseph in the Old Testament, if anybody had a right to complain, he probably did.

Remember him? He's the one whose brother sold him into slavery. He ended up in Egypt in prison. He went from prison to prime minister. And then when his dad died, he had his brothers in front of him. And they were expecting his vengeance. And instead they got his patience.

And I love the verse in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20, where Joseph said to his brothers, You meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good.

He waited quietly. And then thirdly, wait confidently. Notice verse 8. You too be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

[38:50] I enjoy action movies. Take an action movie. The plot's pretty much the same every time. Something horrendous happens to the hero.

And then the rest of the movie is him getting revenge. And so we're taught by Hollywood that strength is demonstrated by being volatile.

Right? By getting revenge. By being anything but patient. But James tells us in this verse that strength is measured by how patient you can be.

You see, if you've got a weak heart, you'll have a short fuse. If you've got a strong heart, you'll have a long fuse.

That's the strength measured by the scriptures and by God. How do you strengthen your heart?

Well, you do curls with this book.

[40:02] We read you a verse. Romans chapter 15 and verse 4. For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance or patience and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

If I'm going to wait confidently, I have to do so with an open Bible so that I know how God dealt with people in the past.

And I know his promises. And I know his principles. And so that I know no matter what happens in my life, what James says in verse 11 is true.

The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. He sent the early rain. He'll send the late rain.

Jesus came the first time. He's coming the second time. He rewarded the patience of Job. I know he'll reward me. Who needs patience today?

[41:12] Do you have uncontrollable circumstances? Your job situation? A long-term illness?

Loved ones that need to be saved? Is there an unchangeable person in your life? You know, on top of everything that Job went through, the only person that was not taken away in his life was his wife. She's only mentioned twice in the book of Job. One time it says, Job says, my breath is offensive to my wife. And the other time, she looks at him and all his suffering and says, why don't you just curse God and die?

Have you got an unchangeable person in your life? Or maybe you've got unexplainable problems. When you're left saying, why me?

Why now? Why this? Why can you be patient? Because God is in control.

[42:39] Because God is at work. Even though most of it is behind the scenes. And God rewards patience. How are you to be patient?

You're to wait expectantly. Jesus is coming back. You're to wait quietly. Not complaining. And you're to wait. And you're to wait.

Confidently. Knowing that he works all things together for good. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your word today.

Thank you for this concept, this principle, this fruit of patience. And Lord, I pray that you would help us today to understand it a little better. And then to demonstrate it in our lives.

In our lives. So that Lord, our prayer would be as people are talking about illustrations of patience. They might even include us in that list. As someone who exudes patience in the midst of trying situations.

[43:46] And Lord, I just pray that you would grow us in this area in a way that demonstrates your grace and your love and your faithfulness. And we thank you in advance for what you're going to do.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.