

The Worthy Walk (Part III)

December 6, 2002

- *Describe a situation in your life when you were challenged to demonstrate a great deal of patience? How did you respond to that situation?*

Remember that we have been examining the characteristics of the worthy walk in Ephesians 4:1-6. We have already examined the characteristics of humility and gentleness. Now we will move on to examine the characteristic of patience.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

- *What are the five essential characteristics that Paul identifies in verses 2 & 3?*

1. Humility:

We have already examined the first of these characteristics, humility.

- *How did we define humility?*

Remember that the term for humility literally means "*to think or judge with lowliness and to have a lowliness of mind.*"

Remember that humility is elusive, because if we focus on it too much, it will turn to pride. We must strive to be humble, but never claim to be humble because when we know that we have it we have lost it.

- *Who was the ultimate example of humility and what was the ultimate act of humility?*

Remember that humility involves a **proper self-awareness** that recognizes from where we came; our sinful nature etc...

Remember also that humility also involves a **proper God-awareness** that recognizes He is perfect, holy and deserving of all praise, honor and glory!

2. Gentleness:

We have also examined the second characteristic that Paul emphasizes in verse 2 as part of the worthy walk, which is gentleness.

- *How did we define gentleness?*

Remember that the biblical term truly refers to that which is mild spirited and self-controlled. It is accurately defined as power or strength under control, specifically under the control of God.

Remember to be gentle means that you have finished with yourself altogether. You have no one to turn to except God and you submit your will to the Master's control.

- *Who was the ultimate example of gentleness?*

Remember that the meek person is normally quiet, soothing, and mild mannered. He is never avenging, vindictive, or self-defensive. He does not attempt to grab for positions of importance or assert authority over others. He accepts God's dealings without arguing or resisting and he is considerate of others.

3. **Patience:**

The third characteristic of the worthy walk that Paul mentions is patience.

Patience Defined & Explained

The term for *patience* literally means long-tempered rather than short-tempered and is sometimes translated "*longsuffering*." Long-suffering means that we do not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it also implies that we should not yield to despondency.

Patience is that long-suffering which makes allowance for others' shortcomings, faults and failures. It endures wrong rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance. It is the ability to endure discomfort, pain and trial without fighting back. Long-suffering appears both in the Old and New Testaments to describe the patience of God with His people (i.e. Exodus 34:6). It is also listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

Patience Illustrated

- *Who are some great examples of patience in the Scripture?*

_____ : He received the promise of God but had to wait many years to see its fulfillment. "Thus," the writer of Hebrews tells us, "having patiently waited, he obtained the promise" (Hebrews 6:5). God had promised that Abraham's descendants would be a great nation (Genesis 12:2) and yet he was not given Isaac, the child of promise, until after Abraham was nearly a hundred years old. "Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20).

_____ : In Genesis 6:13-22 God told him to build a ship in the wilderness, far from any body of water and before there had ever been rain on the earth. For 120 years Noah worked at that task, while preaching to his neighbors of God's coming judgment.

_____ : In the chronicle of faithful Old Testament saints in the book of Hebrews, his patient endurance is mentioned twice. He chose rather "to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" (Hebrews 11:25-27).

_____ : James said, "As an example, brethren, of suffering patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (James 5:10). When God called Jeremiah, He told the prophet that no one would believe his message and that he would be hated, maligned, and

persecuted (Jeremiah 1:5-19). Yet Jeremiah served the Lord faithfully and patiently until the end of his life. Similarly, when the Lord called Isaiah he was told that the nation would not listen to him nor turn from their sin (Isaiah 6:9-12). Like Jeremiah, he preached and ministered with patient faithfulness.

_____ : He was willing to endure any hardship, affliction, ridicule, or persecution in order to patiently serve his Master. "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?" he asked the Christians at Caesarea after the prophet Agabus predicted the apostle's arrest and imprisonment. "For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

A good example of long-suffering in American history is that of Abraham Lincoln. One of Abraham Lincoln's earliest political enemies was Edwin M. Stanton. He called Lincoln a "low cunning clown" and "the original gorilla." "It was ridiculous to go to Africa to see a gorilla when one could find one easily in Springfield, Illinois." Lincoln never responded to the slander, but when, as president, he needed a secretary of war, he chose Stanton. When his incredulous friends asked why, Lincoln replied, "Because he is the best man." Years later, as the slain president's body lay in state, Stanton looked into the coffin and said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." His animosity was finally broken by Lincoln's long-suffering and non-retaliatory spirit.

The Ultimate Example of patience of course is God Himself. It is God's patient love that prevents the world from being destroyed. It is His patience and long-suffering that allows time for men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). As Christ was dying on the cross, rejected by those He had come to save, Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Peter says in 1 Peter 2:23, "*and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.*"

Patience Practiced

In the Greek world self-sacrificing and non-avenging patience were considered weaknesses, unworthy of the noble man or woman. Aristotle, for example, taught that the great Greek virtue was refusal to tolerate insult or injury and to strike back in retaliation for the slightest offense. Vengeance was a virtue. In fact the world seems to make heroes of those who fight back, who stand up for their own welfare and rights above all else. Really this seems to be the mind-set in our nation today.

But as believers we must follow the example of Christ. Our primary concern is for the welfare of others. We certainly should not retaliate for the slightest offense and we should refuse to pay back evil for evil (cf. Romans 12:17; Matthew 5:39).

- ***What is the significance of the following verses as they relate to the believer and patience?***

1 Corinthians 13:4

1 Thessalonians 5:14

1 Peter 2:19-20

John MacArthur says, "The patient saint accepts God's plan for everything, without questioning or grumbling. He does not complain when his calling seems less glamorous than someone else's or when the Lord sends him to a place that is dangerous or difficult. He remembers that God the Son left His heavenly home of love, holiness, and glory to come to earth and be hated, rejected, spat upon, and crucified-without once returning evil for evil or complaining to His Father."

Clearly this is the mind-set that those who have been called by God and adopted as His children should exhibit in their lives.

What do you do when people misrepresent you and falsely accuse you? Do you fight fire with fire or do you exhibit an attitude of patient endurance? How can you demonstrate the characteristic of patience in your walk?