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## What Does the Bible Say About Longsuffering?

### Part 1 – Longsuffering

The heroes of today's culture, portrayed in the media as angry, aggressive defenders of democracy, destroy without [patience](#) or forethought all opposing forces regardless of their personal qualities. In our impatient, self-centered world, one quality of character has all but perished: longsuffering. Similar to patience and [forbearance](#), longsuffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. A person who is longsuffering is not quick to retaliate or promptly punish someone who has insulted, offended or harmed him. The opposite of [anger](#), it is intimately associated with mercy. Longsuffering is an attribute of God and thus a fruit of His [Holy Spirit](#). In this Bible Study on "the [fruit of the Spirit](#)," we will examine longsuffering.

1. What word most accurately describes this spiritual fruit? [Galatians 5:22](#).

**Comment:** Various translations use "longsuffering," "patience" or "forbearance" to translate the Greek word *makrothumia* (*mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah*). This word combines the roots *makro*, meaning "long," and *thumos*, meaning "temper," so it literally means "to be long-tempered." It implies the opposite of "short temper," describing the mind holding back a long time before it expresses itself in action or passion. *Makrothumia* is rarely rendered as "patience" and never as "forbearance" in the New Testament, although both words are considered synonyms of "longsuffering."

2. Is God longsuffering? [Exodus 34:6](#); [Numbers 14:18](#), 27; [Psalm 86:15](#); [Jeremiah 15:15](#).  
What does God's longsuffering prove? [Luke 18:7](#); [Romans 2:4](#); [II Peter 3:9](#), 15.

**Comment:** God *bears long* and is *slow to anger*. Longsuffering is proof of God's [goodness](#), [faithfulness](#) and His desire to grant us salvation. [Romans 2:4](#) describes God as forbearing and longsuffering. Forbearance is refraining from the enforcement of something that is due like a debt, right, or [obligation](#). Longsuffering differs slightly in that its emphasis is on temperament.

3. Does God's longsuffering delay His wrath? [Joel 2:13](#); [Romans 9:22-24](#); [I Peter 3:18-20](#).

**Comment:** God relents from doing harm. His longsuffering is seen in His gracious restraint of His wrath towards those who deserve it. Despite the rebellious condition of [the world](#), He waited [patiently for 120 years](#) while [Noah](#) built the ark and gathered the animals. God's longsuffering does not overlook anything. Unlike man, God has the end in view. He has true insight, knows what is best and is not swayed by human emotions.

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4. How is longsuffering exemplified in Christ? [Matthew 17:17](#); [I Timothy 1:16](#); [II Peter 3:14-15](#).

**Comment:** Christ's patient and enduring handling of sinners demonstrates His longsuffering. God promises that He will be long-tempered with us as we [repent](#) and dedicate ourselves to the obedience and service of God. As in everything else, [Jesus Christ](#) sets the standard of longsuffering.

5. Are others used as an example of longsuffering? [II Corinthians 6:4-6](#); [Hebrews 6:12-15](#); [James 5:8-10](#).

**Comment:** Many of God's servants develop the quality of longsuffering through their service and dedication to Him.

6. Should longsuffering be an integral quality of our character? [Colossians 3:12-13](#); [Ephesians 4:1-3](#); [I Thessalonians 5:14](#); [II Timothy 3:10-11](#); [4:2](#).

**Comment:** As the elect of God, we must put on or clothe ourselves with longsuffering. By doing this in unity as a church, we rid ourselves of, or at least dramatically reduce, friction. To be loving and effective, a minister must correct, rebuke and encourage with longsuffering.

7. Does longsuffering strengthen spiritually? [Colossians 1:9-11](#). Does it show evidence of Godly [love](#)? [I Corinthians 13:4](#).

**Comment:** Paul tells the saints in Colosse that he prays they will possess the trait that is the opposite of wrath or revenge. He speaks of having an even temper, an attitude that in spite of injury or insult does not retaliate. We can develop longsuffering only as a fruit of the Spirit, not as an independent character trait. It grows from the common root of love and bears fruit only along with other spiritual fruit.

[Love takes precedence in this list of gifts of the Spirit and carries the attribute that it suffers long.](#) Longsuffering is extended and patient endurance of offense. Since patience is an aspect of longsuffering, they are very close in intent. Patience is cheerful or hopeful endurance, patient waiting. Therefore, longsuffering is the quality of patiently tolerating the actions of others against us, even when we are severely tried.

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## Part 2 – Longsuffering

We have all heard the phrase, "[Patience is a virtue](#)." Yet we live in a world that is most impatient. We live in the "[I want it now](#)" generation. Everything is fast-paced. Commercials on TV have to be quick to grab the attention of the impatient viewers. Restaurants have to be quick to deliver the meal or people will complain. Everything must be quick. Such are the times in which

we live and if we are not careful, we can soon get caught up in the "I want it now" and "I am in a hurry" mentality.

For a wedding anniversary, we dined in a restaurant where the food took well over an hour to get to our table. (On a busy night one would expect such a wait but the place was virtually empty.) We sat at our table, patiently waiting but after 75 minutes or so, we started becoming a bit impatient. Seeing that it was getting rather late in the evening, and we were hungry, we kindly asked our server if our meal would arrive soon. Our server informed us that there was only one chef on duty and he "is from Germany and likes to take his time to insure that the meal is perfect. Every dish is a masterpiece and must meet his standards. It can be a bit difficult because he is such a perfectionist."

We found out that the dinner he prepared for us initially did not meet his standards so he started over. So after waiting a rather long time, the dish was finally served and we soon realized that it was well worth waiting for. Good meals take time to prepare. This illustrates a great point for this Bible Study-- for whether it is the small things in life or the major trials that come our way,

we are to be patient and have longsuffering in all things and will see a good outcome in the end. God is working a good work in us and just like that German chef, He also is creating a masterpiece... on the inside of us... transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ, **as we yield to God.**

### **PATIENCE**

Most people today are not good at waiting for anything but yet we know that the best things come to those who patiently wait. We, as Christians, must be patient. Waiting on the Lord shapes our Christian character. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He produces "the fruit of the Spirit" on the inside of us.

The Greek word primarily used for patience in the KJV is "hupomone", (hoop-om-on-ay') and it means "*cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy: - enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).*"

Webster's dictionary defines patience as "*The suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or other evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or*

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*fretfulness. Patience may spring from constitutional fortitude, from a kind of heroic pride, or from christian submission to the divine will. A calm temper which bears evils without murmuring or discontent."*

When the KJV Bible speaks of patience, it means to wait with a cheerful heart-- **without complaining.**

### **LONGSUFFERING**

Now, there is another word associated with patience and that is, *long-suffering*, which has a similar meaning but has to do with the longevity of patience in situations-- especially **where people are involved.**

**A good way to look at it is: Patience has to do with circumstances but longsuffering has to do with people in our circumstances.**

The Greek word for longsuffering is "makrothymia" (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah ) and it means, "*Forbearance; patience; disposition to endure long under offenses.*"

Webster's dictionary defines longsuffering as "*the capacity to endure hardship, difficulty, or inconvenience without complaint*" and "*calmness, self-control, and the willingness or ability to tolerate delay.*"

I will use some examples that may help distinguish the two:

Patience is how you conduct yourself in the situations, which come your way. We must have patience in the midst of our trials. Remaining calm and having a cheerful disposition and with a good attitude, by the grace of God, walk through the situation. Whether it is sitting in a traffic jam on the way to work or sitting in a restaurant, awaiting your meal or enduring a major trial such as a sickness or losing one's job, etc., we must have patience.

**Longsuffering is slightly different** than patience for long-suffering has usually to do with your enduring tolerance with other people, who try your patience in different circumstances. Longsuffering also has to do with how you handle a person who **could** easily get on your nerves day in and day out. We should be slow to wrath. It also has to do with your disposition concerning a person who has wronged you.

A person cannot be cheerful when they have been violated in some way, so they will need longsuffering...enduring the pain of a broken heart and allowing God to comfort their heart. There can be no joy when a spouse cheats on their mate-- the victim in the marriage will need longsuffering and as they lean upon the Lord, He will strengthen them to forebear the

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road ahead, as they forgive the person who has wronged them, the joy will return for the Lord will be the source of that joy.

Longsuffering cannot excuse the sin of another, but Christians must forgive the person who has wronged them and give their many burdens to the Lord, trusting Him to work all things for their good. A person who has been wronged is called to forgiveness and longsuffering. Peter asked the Lord, how many times he should have to forgive and the Lord replied, "**Seventy times seven.**" A person will certainly need longsuffering to forgive seventy times seven.

The Bible tells us that God is longsuffering. He calmly waits in His abundant mercy toward us:

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, **longsuffering**, and abundant in goodness and truth, 2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering to us-ward**, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

### **Longsuffering is a gift from God, Himself. It is a fruit of the Spirit:**

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

As we yield to the Holy Spirit, we will find that patience will become a part of our every day lives, even when we are hungry or tired or have had a completely tiresome day. **Patience and longsuffering is a result of yielding our will to the will of the Father, trusting Him that He knows what is best for us, and will give us the strength to endure all things.**

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with **longsuffering**, forbearing one another in love;

This means that we are to put up with one another. A church is comprised of imperfect people: Some will be moody, others will interrupt us when we are talking, while others will be contentious. The Bible addresses these matters pertaining to social fellowship within the church body. Since none of us have "arrived" to perfection, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work a good work on the inside of us.

This does not happen overnight because we do not yield overnight. Just as that chef took his time in preparing that meal for us, so too, the Lord is not hasty to just give us a "fast-food" spiritual makeover. We grow in Christ-- this happens day-by-day and year-by-year. Fruit does not grow overnight and so it is with our Christian walk. We grow in Christ over

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time. There are many lessons to be learned and the flesh does war against the Spirit. But the fruit of the Spirit is love and from love comes joy, and from joy, comes peace, and from peace comes longsuffering and from longsuffering comes gentleness...etc.

Each fruit accompanies the other. Does that mean a Christian is always kind and patient? Unfortunately, not, but we should be...yet so MANY times the flesh gets in the way. **But as we yield to God, who produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we will see more of Jesus and less of ourselves.**

The things we loved a few years ago will not matter, if we are yielded to the Spirit-- for it is God who is working on the inside of us. I have heard people say, "Oh I was a better Christian when I first got saved." **No, you THOUGHT you were** because you did not know your own heart but as you grow in Christ, the Lord shows you other areas that need attention **that you did not see** when you first got saved and that is where repentance and prayer to God come into focus.

The following are areas in which we, as Christians, are called to be patient:

1Cor 13:4 Charity [love] **suffereth long**, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

### 1) Bringing Forth Fruit With Patience

Luk 8:15 **But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.**

When you plant an apple seed in the ground, it takes years for the tree to grow-- and even more time to produce apples but eventually the fruit appears. Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. We have heard His word, kept it and bring forth fruit by yielding to the Holy Spirit, who produces fruit within us.

### 2) Enduring Trials and Tribulations With Patience

Rom 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation **worketh patience**;

2Cor 6:3-6 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, **in much patience**, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, **by longsuffering**, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love

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unfeigned

James 5:10-11 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of **patience**. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

### 3) Patient With All People

Col 3:12-14 **Put on therefore**, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, **longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another**, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

A pastor is called to longsuffering with their congregations. There are people who may repeatedly try his patience week after week. Having patience with the sheep pleases God and the Holy Spirit further develops the spiritual character of the pastor. The pastor must never endorse sin in the church, nor compromise the Bible but he can have compassion with the person who is weak in the faith and lead that person in the right direction. This, too, takes patience. 2Tim 2:24-25a **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;

### 4) Running the Christian race with patience.

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and **let us run with patience** the race that is set before us,

James 1:4 But **let patience** have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

### 5) Patiently Waiting For The Coming Of The Lord

2 Thess 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the **patient waiting for Christ**.

James 5:7,8 **Be patient therefore**, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. **Be ye also patient**; stablish your hearts: for the coming of

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the Lord draweth nigh.

Rom 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Every day, we should be waiting for the Lord's return but we should not sit in idleness as we wait. The Lord Jesus gave us the Great Commission, and where He leads us, we should go. What He enables us to do, we should do-- by His power. Christ said, "**Without Me ye can do nothing.**"

The Lord may not return for 20 more years. We do not know when Jesus is coming. The question is are we **allowing God to work in and through us** each and every day?

Matthew 9:37-38 Then saith he unto his disciples, **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.**

## **CONCLUSION**

We are His hands and feet upon this earth. How shall we then live?

Eccl 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and **the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.**

Rom 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; **patient in tribulation**; continuing instant in prayer;

Col 1:10-12 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, **being fruitful in every good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, **unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness**; **Giving thanks unto the Father**, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Phil 4:6,7 Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but **in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, **shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

2Peter 1:4-8 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance **patience**; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. **For if**



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**these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

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May we look to the Lord to help us in all areas of our Christian walk. He has called us by His grace. As we yield to God, we find that He is more than able to meet our needs and He will continue a good work on the inside of us. Our confidence must be in the Lord and we must be yielded to **His leading**.

Php 1:6 - Being confident of this very thing, **that he which hath begun** a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ

Eph 6:24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.