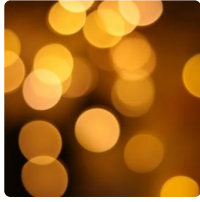


# OpenTheo

## Long Suffering and Endurance



### **Charisma and Character** - Steve Gregg

In his discussion on the fruit of the Spirit, Steve Gregg narrows his focus to the concept of long suffering and endurance. He synthesizes information from Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 to explain the interrelationship between humility and long suffering, or patience. Gregg emphasizes that spiritual endurance and patience can only be achieved through the Lord, and that hope towards God inspires hupomone, or perseverance, in trials. He also cautions against impatience and eagerness, highlighting the need to wait patiently on the Lord for renewed strength.

### **Transcript**

I know that a few lectures ago, I think it was the one before the last, I mentioned that in our treatment of the fruit of the Spirit, we're going to restrict the range of our study to those fruits that are listed in Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23. I've changed my mind. We're going to cover more than just those, and the reason is simply that I've, in studying today for tonight's lesson, I've become aware of how many other fruits of the Spirit are actually listed in other passages that I simply can't resist the temptation to teach on in the course of this series.

Also, I discovered by counting up weeks that we have more time available than I thought. Not as much as I'd like. I just figured out I'd like to have about nine more lectures in this series, but we won't.

I think there will be about five more. I think I'll put together five more. Whereas I actually thought at one point I might be finishing up tonight or next week, but I looked at our calendar and some of the other things we have to accomplish this year after I finish this series, I think we'll have time to do so, even though I'm taking a little bit more material than I announced a few weeks ago.

This is a series that's evolving week by week, and I did not, for example, at the beginning of the series already have it all charted out how many sessions there would be or all the topics we would take. In the first part of this lecture, I want to speak about the contents of the handout that I've given you, and then I want to spend the rest of the time

talking about the fruit of patience or long suffering or actually both. There are a number of passages that I found today that would be in some ways parallel to the passage which lists the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians five versus twenty two and twenty three.

They're not really parallel exactly, but they are passages which contain lists of items, usually five to eight items in each list. And each of these lists have at least three items that overlap items in the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians five. Twenty two.

Now, the the six passages I'd like to look at in a moment here, none of them actually use the term fruit of the Spirit in Galatians five, but I've said from the beginning that I don't believe that the Galatians chapter five list is comprehensive. And when I mentioned we would just restrict ourselves to that list, it was because I thought we had shortage of time, which I've come to find we don't have quite as little time as I thought. So I would like to look at these lists so that we could familiarize ourselves with some of the fruit of the Spirit.

That is, in addition to the nine fruits listed in Galatians five. Now, as I say, the term fruit of the Spirit is not found in any of these three six passages. These are just lists, but the things listed are in character and in nature very much like the things listed in Galatians five, twenty two and twenty three.

And the reason I chose these six passages is because each of them have at least three points of overlapping with the list in Galatians five. In some cases, it's the majority of the list. In some cases, it's half or so.

But let's look, first of all, at Second Corinthians, six, six. Just want to read these. In most cases, it's a single verse.

In one case, it's a few verses in Second Corinthians, six. And verse six, Paul said, and he's referring to his own credentials, his own ministry. And I'm picking up in the middle of a sentence because with Paul, sometimes that's necessary because this particular sentence goes on for many verses long, beginning at verse four.

But he is he is listing the ways by which he is credentialed his ministry. He is attested or his ministry is attested to be from God and genuine. And in verse six, he says, by purity, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit.

By sincere love, and he goes on by the word of truth and by some other things there, but in in this particular verse, we find long suffering, kindness and love, all of which are also listed in Galatians five as fruits of the Holy Spirit. The other things in here, especially purity. Certainly seems to belong to the same category, and we might discuss whether knowledge really belongs to the category of fruits, the spirits.

After all, Paul listed knowledge in his list of gifts and simply the reference to the Holy Spirit here is in the list. It's rather peculiar that he'd list it with these other items. But we

can see that this is a list that resembles only a bit shorter.

The list in Galatians five and three of the five things listed are found in the Galatians five list. You'll turn over to Ephesians four. After we read these verses, I'm going to synthesize the information that we've read, and that's what I've done in the form of the handout that I've given you in Ephesians four, verse two.

I suppose we'll take verse one to get the context, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love. Now, this list has five items, as the previous one we looked at did, and again, three of them are in the list that Paul gives in Galatians and for the spirit, they're not the same three. We've got gentleness, long suffering and a gap, a love in this list also, all of which correspond or overlap with the fruits of the spirit in Galatians.

Let's look over now at Colossians chapter three and verse twelve. Colossians three and verse twelve says, therefore, as the elective God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies. The Greek word here means compassion.

So compassion, I think, would qualify as something of the same character as those things called the fruit of the spirit. Kindness, which is in the Galatians list, humbleness of mind, meekness, also in the Galatians list, long suffering. Also in the Galatians list, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.

Now, that would be forbearance and forgiveness, although those, I think, belong in general to the subject of long suffering and compassion, which are listed earlier. But we will we'll recognize seven fruits here, of which three are in the Galatians list, compassion, kindness, humility. Meekness, long suffering, bearing with and forgiving.

I guess we did include those in the list. But you see, there are three again there that correspond with what with the list in Galatians. Let's go over to First Timothy now, chapter six.

By the way, I'd point out that the passage we just read in Colossians, it says, put on these things at a later time. We're going to talk about how to cultivate the fruit of the spirit after we've talked about the individual fruits. Our final lecture will talk about how to cultivate the fruit of the spirit.

And we'll talk about what it means to put on these things, because obviously it means to add them to your life. We'll see that Peter says something like that, too. But in First Timothy, chapter six and verse eleven, Paul says, but you, O man of God, flee these things.

And in the context of these things, refer to the love of money. And pursue righteousness, by the way, the word righteousness, the Greek word also means justice. It's identical in

the Greek.

You can whenever this word is used, it can be translated either righteousness or justice. I myself think that justice is perhaps a better translation for Paul's purposes. But we'll talk about that another time.

Godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Now, in this case, faith and love and gentleness are items that all correspond to the list in Galatians. So three out of these six are overlappers.

Now, in Second Timothy, chapter three and verse ten, by the way, the previous passage we just looked at, Paul said to pursue these things in Colossians. He said, put them on here. He says, pursue them now in Second Timothy three and verse ten.

Paul says, but you have carefully followed my doctrine, which simply means his teaching manner of life. Purpose, faith, long suffering, love, perseverance and verse 11 continues, but it simply talks about external circumstances rather than fruit of the spirit. Persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me.

So here we have a list of seven things that would be character traits, which would include doctrine, if we would include that his manner of life is mentioned. His purpose, but the next three faith, long suffering and agape love are all, of course, fruits of the spirit. And therefore, we have reason to believe that those that he lists here that are not in that Galatians was probably in his mind were of the same character.

They belong to the same list. Perseverance is also there, which is a little different than long suffering. Tonight, we're going to be talking about long suffering and perseverance separately as soon as we've finished summarizing what we have before us in this in these lists.

Look at now, finally, Second Peter. This is the sixth of the passages I want to draw your attention to here. Second Peter, chapter one.

Verses five through seven, Peter, this time says, but also for this very reason, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge, self-control. That's in the Galatians list to self-control, perseverance to perseverance, godliness to godliness, brotherly kindness. Actually, brotherly kindness in the Greek is the word Philadelphia.

And if you look at it in the Greek New Testament, that what's translated brotherly kindness is just it's the word Philadelphia. It's a Greek word means brotherly love. It is not necessarily kindness.

I remember that Galatians speaks of kindness is one of the fruit, but this is a different word in the Greek. And this is an ad to brotherly kindness, love or agape. So here we have faith.

And self-control and love in this list of items out of eight items, three also correspond to some of the ones in Galatians five. Now, that might not be overly exciting to you to know. But what I've sought to demonstrate is that in many places in the scripture, there are lists of traits.

Or virtues or graces in the life, we could say the older Puritan writers used to call them graces in the Christian life that really are in nature, pretty much the same kinds of things that Paul lists in Galatians five and where he calls them fruit of the spirit. And I think the fact that each of these lists have at least three items in the list that are also in the list of the fruits of the spirit, that if Paul were asked about this, of course, we can't confirm this because he's not here. I think he would say, well, yeah, sure.

Of course, these other things are fruit of the spirit, too. This is this is just all, you know, sampling each each list is a sampling, none of them being comprehensive. Now, in the second chart on the handout I've given you, I've listed in the the first column.

Those fruits that are listed in Galatians five, twenty two and twenty three in the order that Paul gives them there in the other six columns, I've gone back over the verses we just looked at and shown at what points the passages overlap. Now, we've already called your attention that this second Corinthians six, six, six has a gap and long suffering and kindness in it. Ephesians four, two has a gap, a long suffering and gentleness.

Colossians three, twelve is long suffering, kindness and meekness, which is, by the way, in the Greek, the same word is gentleness in Galatians five, twenty two and twenty three. This word is translated both ways, but the same Greek word in the two passages. First Timothy six, eleven had a gap, a faith and gentleness.

Second Timothy three, ten had a gap, a long suffering and faith. And second Peter one versus five through seven had a gap, a faith and self-control. But each of those passages had some others, too.

And below the gray line there on the list, I've listed the additional things that each passage had. And in some cases they overlap each other. They don't overlap the Galatians five passage because they go beyond what it includes.

But you can see they overlap each other. For example, second Corinthians six, six and second Peter one both include knowledge in the list, presumably knowledge of God. There's a possibility I'm not sure of it, that when in second Timothy three, ten Paul speaks of doctrine that might might also be equated with knowledge.

But it's not entirely clear that that would be the case. Second Corinthians six, six also lists purity. None of the other passages do.

But certainly there's reason to believe that that should be included in our composite list of the fruit of the spirit. Ephesians four, two and Colossians three, twelve both mentioned

humility, although one in one place, it's translated lowliness of mine. And in the other humility, both of the same concept.

And the Colossians three, twelve passage also has compassion or it was bowels of mercy, bowels of compassion is the literal expression in the Greek. The last three passages in the last three columns, first Timothy six, eleven, second Timothy three, ten and second Peter, chapter one, all have perseverance. Now, in first Timothy, it is translated endurance in the New King James, but it's the same Greek word in all three places.

Perseverance or endurance are the same Greek word in the three passages. So they belong altogether there. And then godliness is found in the first Timothy passage and in the second Peter passage.

The first Timothy passage also has godliness, excuse me, righteousness, the which I've said I would equate with justice, and I think maybe even prefer that translation in this case. The second Peter passage has virtue. This may or may not be the same thing as righteousness.

It seems as though it might also that second Peter passage has brotherly love or Philadelphia, which is not in any of the other lists. And then sort of tagged on at the end, I've shown that in first Timothy six, eleven, there's also manner of life and purpose. These seem a little more generic.

After all, a manner of life is behavior in general. And it seems to me like all of all of these fruits are part of a person's manner of life that they're walking in the spirit and purpose. You know, I guess I'm not sure that that really belongs in a list of the fruit.

I'm not sure that it doesn't. But since Paul includes it, one of those lists, I guess I felt like I didn't have the liberty to omit it. But if you look at all those items below the gray line there, you'll find that in addition to the nine fruits of the spirit in Galatians, these passages give us several more, six more, at least humility, righteousness or justice, compassion or mercy, purity, godliness and perseverance.

And I think I think all of us can just see at a glance, those six items are every bit as much fruit of the spirit of the same kind of things that are listed in Galatians five. Therefore, in the series, I've decided to augment the list in Galatians five to include these additional six that come from comparing the other list. And the only reason I've given you this handout and gone over this material is to show you where I'm going to get some of the material that we'll be having.

Because, for example, tonight we want to talk about long suffering and perseverance. Or endurance or the King James Bible always translated that word patience, not always, but usually now long suffering is in Galatians five as a fruit of the spirit. Perseverance is not,

but it is found in three of the other lists.

And therefore, because of its close relationship to long suffering, I'm going to put those together. Likewise, in the remaining lectures, there will be some lectures that combine items that are found in the Galatians five passage with some from other passages. And that's why I wanted to give you this general overview of the total number of fruit of the spirit that we have listed in the Bible.

Which is not to say there aren't others. In fact, I don't think I have time to. I'd love to give a lecture also on thankfulness, which I consider gratitude to be a fruit of the spirit as well.

That's not listed in any of these particular lists, but certainly thankfulness or gratitude is spoken of frequently in the Bible. And I'm not sure that any of us would be interested in arguing that it doesn't belong in a list like this. But we probably won't have time to include that in this series.

It's a wonderful subject, though. Tonight, as I said, I want to talk about long suffering and perseverance. Now, there's something a bit confusing about the translating of these concepts in the King James Version and to a certain extent in the New King James as well.

And that is this, that the word long suffering. Was fairly consistently used in the King James Version to convey the notion of what in our modern English, we would say patience. And, you know, when we say we'll have patience, what we're asking people to do is wait.

Wait patiently, they may not be under great stress, they may not be under great affliction. They just have to wait. They just have to undergo the inconvenience of waiting for something to happen.

Whereas the the King James Version, when it actually is the word patience. It meant something else than what we usually mean by it. That is to say.

The King James used the word patience to refer to a Greek word that really means something like endurance. Or perseverance. Standing up under trial, standing up under affliction, it's not just a matter of biding your time and waiting for something to happen.

It's a matter of surviving. With your wits and your faith about you until deliverance comes. It, too, is related to the subject of waiting and being patient in the way that we usually speak of that word today.

But it has this added dimension of remaining faithful under duress, under under trial, under hardship, enduring and persevering as a Christian should, by the grace of God. Now, I say that that's a peculiarity of the King James Version. Most of you probably are

not using the King James Version, but the new King James, which we are using officially in these studies, has followed the policy of the King James to a certain extent.

And it's one of the great surprises to me in the new King James Version. The new King James translators have made an effort to remove archaic language that was in the King James and supply the most exact, the most precise modern English equivalent in most cases. But here they have not shown consistency because the Greek word that the King James called long suffering, the new King James usually retains the word long suffering, although that's not really a very modern word.

But most of the time you'll find it as long suffering in the new King James, with two exceptions. Twice it is translated patience. Now, as I said earlier, patience in the way we speak of that in modern English would be a good translation all the way through.

When you hear the word long suffering, realize that the concept there is what we normally talk about being patient. It doesn't really talk about suffering at all. In fact, the Greek word that's translated long suffering is macro thumia.

Macro thumia, I'll spell it if you're wanting it in your notes, it's M A K. This is, of course, the English characters, not the Greek. M A K R O T H U M I A. With the accent on the eye. So it's macro thumia.

And this comes from two Greek particles. The macro means long and thumia means passion or temper. And so literally it means long tempered.

If a person is macro thumia, they are long tempered. Well, obviously that's not a very... Actually, long suffering is not really a very bad archaic English rendering because long is part of it, long suffering. And the word suffering is a meaning of passion.

If you recall, many of you know that the week, the final week before Easter is called Passion Week. You might have wondered why they call it Passion Week. Because passion is an old English word for suffering.

It's the week of Jesus' passion or his suffering. And so long passion is actually a literal translation of macro thumia. And the closest English exact translation would be exactly something long tempered, long passion, or if passion is taken in the sense of suffering, long suffering.

But the problem is long suffering is not a modern word. Most people don't use it. And for the concept of macro thumia, the modern English speaking person would use patience.

OK, so I want that to be clear because it gets confusing the way this is translated. Now, what makes it confusing is that there is another word translated patience in the New Testament, in some of the older versions, the King James and even, I think occasionally in the New King James also. And that's the word hupomone, hupomone, it's H-U-P-O, H-U-



P-O-M-O-N-E.

Again, it's H-U-P-O-M-O-N-E, hupomone. That too comes from two Greek particles. Hupo means under.

And mone is the word very frequently used in the scripture for abide or remain. In fact, the Gospel of John makes very frequent use of this Greek word mone. It's a dwelling or abiding or remaining.

Anyway, or continuing. Hupomone means abiding under or remaining under. The implication being that you are under some burden, you are under some trial, but you don't drift.

You remain, you remain firm, you remain steadfast, under trial, under suffering. You don't change. You stay faithful under trial.

And so the word perseverance or endurance is really a much better English translation of that word, as the lexicons point out. But the King James Version translated that patience. And so I don't know that the New King James does very often in that case.

I think the New King James usually translates it perseverance or endurance. I'm pretty sure that's the case. Now, let me give you some other people's attempts at defining patience or long suffering or endurance.

When we were when our children were very little, of course, some of them were still fairly small, but I remember when Benjamin was little. Of course, parents always have to tell children to be patient because children are naturally patient and adults don't tend to be very naturally patient either. But children always want something and when they want it, they want it now.

And so parents are always in the position to be saying, well, just be patient, just be patient. And of course, it was inevitable that the child's probably age three or four or somewhere around there says, what does patient mean? What is patience? You know, and that I found not the easiest thing in the world to answer. I mean, I know what patience means, but how do I put it in other words? How do I put it in words that a child can understand or for that matter? How can I put it into words that really brings out its meaning even for an adult with a somewhat better vocabulary? Well, I've gathered some various definitions that have been given by scholars and so forth.

And I'd like to give them to you. W.E. Vine, who is the author of the Expositor Dictionary of New Testament Words. He talks about macrothumia, which is the word long suffering or sometimes patience.

And about hupomone, which is the word that should be translated endurance or perseverance. The first of these words, macrothumia, he said, is the quality of self-

restraint in the face of provocation. It's the opposite of anger.

And it's associated with mercy. Now, it's the opposite of getting angry under provocation. Circumstances are not going your way.

Things aren't materializing as you want them to. Things aren't progressing as fast as they should. Someone's keeping you waiting or whatever.

And being patient means you don't get angry. It's associated with mercy. You extend mercy to the person who's trying your patience.

It's it's it might be a corollary or it might be something that really arises out of a merciful disposition. But it is this specific self-restraint in the face of provocation. That's what *macrothumia* means.

Whereas *hupomone*, which should be translated endurance or perseverance, Vine says it's the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. It's the opposite of despondency. And it's associated with hope.

Now, very few people tried to write that down as near as I can tell, but that to my mind is very profound and helpful definition that the first of these words usually translate long suffering in the Bible that we're using here. It is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. Whereas *hupomone* is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

Both of these words, Vine says, are the opposite of something and both of them are associated with some other character trait. The first of these words, long suffering, is the opposite of anger. But the perseverance word, *hupomone*, is the opposite of despondency, which is, of course, natural in the flesh if you're in great trial to become despondent, to kind of lose heart.

Those who have *hupomone* abide strong under trial. And both of them are said to be associated with something else. Long suffering is associated with the quality of mercy.

Whereas *hupomone*, perseverance, is associated with the quality of hope. Under trial, you have hope and that strengthens you to persevere. The Bible makes that point many, many times.

I think that W.E. Vine does an excellent job. I also considered on the word long suffering, *Nacrothumia*, the work of a man named Spiros Zoriades, a Greek Bible scholar. And he translated *Nacrothumia*, long suffering, as a self-restraint of mind before it gives room to action or passion.

Patience with respect to persons, as opposed to *hupomone*, which is endurance and patience toward things or circumstances. So, long suffering is being patient with people

and hypomene is being patient with circumstances. Enduring circumstances and things that are not personal.

You see, that's why the first of them is associated with mercy. Mercy is something you extend to a person. You don't extend mercy toward a circumstance.

So, in circumstance, you have hope toward God of being released. And this inspires hypomene, perseverance. I have a quote here from John Wesley.

He says, but what is patience? Here's his definition. John Wesley. But what is patience? He says, it is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God in the manner and time that pleases him.

Unquote. I'll give you that again. John Wesley said, but what is patience? It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God in the manner and time that pleases him.

That is, whatever God causes to come upon you, you are disposed to receive it and to receive it in the manner and in the timing that he gives it. That's also not a bad. That's probably that takes in both long suffering and perseverance in its definition.

If you wonder what we said to our children when they asked us what patience means, we simply said it's waiting with a happy heart. And I didn't know. I mean, that's what I said from the top of my head in child's language.

I did not realize at the time until later that that's actually supported in scripture. That long suffering, at least, is waiting with a happy heart. I can show you that in scripture.

I didn't know it when I came up with it, but it turned out to be true after all. In Colossians, of course, I thought it was true. I just didn't know it could be supported scripturally quite so well as it can be.

In Colossians 1, 11, I'm going to actually read verses 10 and 11. Colossians 1, 10 says that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful. Now, this sounds like he's using the term fruit of the spirit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power for all patience and long suffering with joy.

OK, patience, there is who promoting. That's endurance of perseverance. Long suffering, of course, is macro to me.

And so both of these words are we're having with joy. We must wait with a happy heart with joy. Now, both of these words presuppose a circumstance that does not automatically inspire joy, whether it's having to wait longer than you feel comfortable waiting for something or whether it's actually having to endure hardship, pain or affliction.

Affliction while waiting, neither of these naturally inspires joy, but it says that we should have these qualities with joy. There should be a cheerfulness. There should be a happy heart associated with this waiting.

Now, it's quite clear that Paul believes that this is not possible for human beings without God's strength, because he prays and wishes that we might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power for all patience and long suffering with joy. In other words, so that we can be patient and have long suffering with joy. He wishes for us to be strengthened with God's might and God's power.

This is something that is supernatural. That's why Paul refers to it as a fruit of the spirit. So the spirit must produce this.

You cannot have spiritual patience, spiritual long suffering and endurance without the Lord. Now, you might say, but aren't there an awful lot of people who don't have the Lord and don't have his Holy Spirit who end up waiting for things just like everybody else does, and even surviving and enduring under great hardships? It's quite clear that in the Nazi death camps where, you know, people like Corrie ten Boom suffered and her sister, of course, suffered very joyfully and cheerfully. Corrie had more struggles with it, but there are many people who survived that and lived to tell the tale who didn't know the Lord.

Not everyone there was a Christian who survived. So what's the difference? What's the difference between those who did not have God and endured and persevered on the one hand, and those who did have God and persevered and endured? Well, it's simply this. They do it with joy.

The one does it with joy. The one does it graciously. One receives grace to endure, and that grace is a work of God.

It's the working of the Holy Spirit, his mighty power. Enduring with joy is supernatural. Enduring, some people endure without joy and without any supernatural aid, but we are not expected to live a non-supernatural life.

The Christian life is a supernatural life by definition, and Paul makes it clear that in his mind, these qualities are to be present with joy, but only through the power of God working us. By the way, another very close definition to this with patience, I said waiting with a happy heart or with joy. The Psalms a couple of times, well, once the Psalms and once the prophets speak of waiting quietly or waiting silently before God, and this too is probably not only waiting happily, but waiting quietly.

And this would mean with a restful or reposeful, not agitated spirit. I'll give you some references for that just so that you can have them if you want them. In your notes, in Psalm 62, in verse 7, it says, In God is my salvation and my glory.

The rock, I'm sorry, that's not the right verse. Where is it? Oh, it's verse 5. Sorry. I love verse 7, it's not bad.

I did write down verse 7 for some reason, but verse 5 is what I should have written down. My soul waits silently for God, alone, for my expectation, which means my hope, is from him. I can wait silently.

And silently doesn't mean if you're patient, you won't peep. But of course, it means quiet down from your turmoil, quiet from your agitation, quiet from your being cast down within me. Just shut up and put up.

And I mean, not so much resentfully, but in the sense of at rest, at peace with the situation. Because my hope is in God. Therefore, I can wait silently in Lamentations, which is right after the book of Jeremiah.

And of course, believed by most to have been written by Jeremiah. Lamentations, chapter 3, in verse 26, says it is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Waiting silently, waiting quietly.

Both are associated with hoping in God. The psalmist says, I will wait silently because my expectation, or my hope, is in God. Lamentations says, it is good to hope in God and wait quietly.

Quietly for God. So patience could be said to be waiting happily, in a sense, waiting restfully, quietly. It's not just waiting.

It's waiting graciously. It's waiting with the gracious character that only the Holy Spirit can bestow at times when our flesh would be stirred up. And that's why both of these refer to a quality of restraint in the character.

Now, what this really comes down to is simply being resigned to the will of God. We might even say being content, though content isn't necessarily the right word, but being resigned to God's will is what makes it possible to exercise patience. Every one of us has a will of our own, and that will includes things that we would like to have right now or in the near future.

Things that we're working toward. Things that we'd like to be different, that we hope may be different someday. Goals we hope to attain or to achieve.

Circumstances and trials that we hope to be rid of at some point in the future. And we're eager for those things to be gone. We're eager for the change in circumstance.

But it's quite obvious that in the sovereign providence of God, they have not changed. And we are left in a circumstance that is other than what we would choose and other than that which naturally stokes up a feeling of joy and happiness about it. And the only

way to be patient in the spiritual sense of that word is to be resigned to the will of God and say, OK, the circumstances I'm in, I'm waiting on God.

I'm waiting for God to come and do what he's going to do. In the meantime, I'll wait quietly. I'll wait cheerfully.

I'll endure what he wants me to endure. Just as Wesley said, a disposition to suffer whatever God pleases in the manner and time that pleases him. Just a matter of being resigned to God.

There's a psalm that is relevant to this point. It is Psalm 37, and I like to read verses five through seven. Psalm 37, verses five through seven.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring it.

He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday, probably meaning your vindication. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Cease from anger. Remember, long suffering is the opposite of anger and forsake wrath. Do not fret.

It only causes harm. Now, here we say, commit your way to the Lord. Trust in the Lord.

He says, rest in the Lord. OK, these all have to do with resigning yourself to God. I've committed it to God.

It's in his hands. I'll allow him to take care of it from here on out at his rate, at whatever speed he wishes. I will rest in him.

I will trust in him. I will put away anger. I will not fret.

I will not allow agitation of heart to accompany the wait and the delay. I will wait patiently for him. All of these are in the passage.

All of them are, of course, intermingled inseparably in the concept and the experience of patience. If you'd look with me at 2 Kings, we have an example here of a king, Jehoram of Israel, who is a good example of not being resigned to the will of God and waiting patiently on him. Jehoram was the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, after the nation of Israel split into two.

He's one of them. At a certain time in history, he was the king. And it was during the time of Elisha.

And the Syrians came and attacked and besieged Samaria, which was the capital of the northern kingdom. And he was starving them out. In fact, early in this chapter, about verse 28 or whatever, this woman appears to the king, asking for help.

He says, what's wrong? She said, well, my friend and I said, listen, we'll eat my son today and your son tomorrow. And so we ate my son yesterday, but now she won't give us her son today. And the king, when he realized the famine conditions were so bad that the women were eating their own children, he tore his clothes.

And he said, I'm going to, well, I'm going to kill Elisha for this. Now, that didn't seem like a very rational thing to do. The guy was at his wit's end.

I guess he assumed that Elisha might, you know, since the famine is continuing, Elisha's God isn't helping. And maybe there's a famine continuing because Baal, who was also worshipped in Israel at that time, might be upset that there's a guy like Elisha around. So whatever his thinking was, he decided to go capture and arrest Elisha.

Well, he came and it says his servant came ahead of him and the king behind. And in verse 33 of this chapter, 2 Kings 6, 33, did I not give you the reference before? Sorry about that. 2 Kings 6, 33, while he, that is the servant who preceded the king, was still talking with them, that is with Elisha and his crew.

There was the messenger coming down to him and he said, surely this calamity is from the Lord. That is, the king Jehoram said, surely this calamity is from Jehovah. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Now, in chapter 7, Elisha said, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, tomorrow about this time a sea of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel and two seas of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria. Now, basically what he's saying is food will be abundant and cheap by this time tomorrow. Now, the city had been under siege long enough.

We don't know how many months or whatever. They've used up all the reserves inside the walls and now people are eating their own offspring to stay alive. But Elisha said, hey, you just had to wait one more day.

But the king, the day before the actual deliverance came, said, well, why should we wait any longer for the Lord? This is from the Lord. Why should we wait for him anymore? Well, because it is from the Lord is the answer. If this is from the Lord, you should keep waiting.

And it's a shame you kind of got so impatient so soon. You just missed it by one day. He endured for weeks or months.

It may be, but just one day before deliverance actually came, he lost his patience because he recognized it was from the Lord, but he wasn't willing to just resign himself

to God's timing. He was about ready to kill Elisha over. It didn't end up doing so because Elisha's prophecy came true and Elisha was vindicated.

But many of the characters in the Bible, their stories are characterized by their need to endure great periods of waiting for the promises of God to come true in their lives. Abraham's a good example of that, of course, because when he was 75 years old, God promised him that he'd be the father of a multitude. But when he got to be 87 or 88, I think it was, he had only one son.

And then God finally gave him another son, the one he promised. The one that he had wasn't even the one God promised. It was actually 25 years from the time God promised him a seed until the time the promised seed came.

He had to wait a quarter of a century. And you ask, well, people lived a lot longer back then. Well, it's true.

He lived 175 years. But still, 25 years is a long time to wait, even if you're going to live a lot longer than that. Not very many things I've waited for 25 years for that God had promised me distinctly before.

I mean, if you have a promise from God, you get a little eager for it. You know, this book project that I wrote, it took three years. I had no idea when I approached the publisher three years ago that I'd be still here three years later and the book's still not published.

Well, it turns out, hopefully the wait's not much longer. Should be out in a couple of months. But not all that easy waiting.

You know, when you get a manuscript done, you're eager to see it in print. But by the time I finished it, it was still going to be another nine months or more from I think more than that, I remember. But I know waiting for something that's been promised and that you know is coming and something desirable, something you really want is a hard thing to do.

But I haven't had to wait 25 years for anything. Three years is hard enough. But Abraham was a great man of faith and he just had to resign himself to the will of God and pass the time.

Joseph's another example, a man who was promised through dreams when he was a young man at 17. God showed him in dreams he would rule over his brothers. They'd bow down to him.

But he got sold into Egypt. Didn't look like that was going to happen anytime soon. And it didn't happen anytime soon.

It happened about 17 years later. And it was quite 15 years later, something like that.



But I think it was 17 or 19.

It was quite a long time he had to wait. Some of that time he waited in prison and sometimes as a slave in a household. But eventually it came true.

He just had to wait for God to come through with his promises. Job lost everything. We don't know how long he went in his afflicted state, but it was long enough to be very uncomfortable for him to almost give up hope, even to begin to have questions about whether God was doing the just thing or not.

But finally, God came through and fixed the situation. And it says in James chapter 5, you've heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very merciful and of tender mercy. God was good to him in the latter end, but Job had to have patience.

You've heard of the patience of Job. That would be, of course, Pouponmoni, his perseverance under trial. And then, of course, there's David.

I'm mainly thinking of the most notable cases that we know in the Old Testament. There'd be many others, lesser known people. But David was a guy who was anointed to be king when he was a young boy, not very old.

And instead of just going directly to the throne, he ended up having to go into the woods and live in caves and dens of the earth and be persecuted and endure hardship a very long time before God actually caused the vision to materialize. All of these men are great men in our memory and great heroes of God in the Old Testament. And all of them have at least one thing in common.

In addition to their faith in God, they had to have patience. They had to wait and just resign themselves to God's timing. Even David knew that the only way the promises God made to David could only come true if Saul died.

Well, there was twice that David had the opportunity to cause that eventuality to materialize. He actually had Saul at his mercy twice and refused to take matters into his own hand to hasten the fulfillment of his own exaltation that God had promised him. He was going to wait on God.

He's going to leave that in God's hands. And he didn't do that. He didn't take matters into his own hands.

Now, I don't want to focus entirely tonight on the patience of God, because we're talking about the fruit of the spirit in our lives and we need to talk about our own experience of patience. But we can't really understand the fruit of the spirit unless we understand the character of God, because the fruit of the spirit is just so many aspects of God or Christ's own character. The fruit of the spirit is just the character of Christ broken down into

pieces for us to look at it individually.

And certainly the Bible talks about God's great long suffering. I don't know that the Bible talks about his perseverance so much because God doesn't. He's not under affliction quite in the same sense that we are in this world.

But his long suffering, his restraint, his quality of restraint in the face of provocation. Certainly God has been provoked by his creation a great deal, but he has endured great long suffering. I'd like to show you some of the scriptures that call special attention to God's patience, because the way the reason the reason I want you to see this and it's so important to our own experience of the fruit of the spirit is that these qualities come to us as we look at him.

Not as we look at ourselves, the boy, I'm so impatient. How can I get more patient? The change in us occurs as we look at him and see his qualities. It says that, for example, in Second Corinthians 318.

In Second Corinthians 318, it says, but we all with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are changed from glory to glory into that same image. While we with our faces unveiled are looking, although it may be as through a mirror through a glass, but we are looking at the glory of the Lord. We're looking at him and his nature and his character as we are looking at him.

We are being changed from glory to glory into that same image. Paul says that Second Corinthians 318. So it is the view of God, the view of Christ that actually transforms us into that same image, according to Paul.

And John said something or implied something like that in First John chapter three. In First John, chapter three, the opening verses, Paul said, beloved, now are we the sons of God. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

Notice we will be like him because we will see him as he is. Right now, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Right now, we're being changed from glory to glory into that image.

But when we seem like he is, we'll be like him. The transformation will be complete. Becoming like Jesus in our character is a result of keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus.

Dwelling upon his excellencies, his glory, his character. And as that happens, we are changed from glory to glory into that likeness. So when we look at character traits that we're hoping to find arising within us, it's essential that we be able to see those traits in God and in Christ, because that's actually the image into which we're growing.

And it's the very view of that that affects the transformation in us, according to Paul and

and Peter or John. Let me show you a few things about Paul's and other writers view of God's long suffering and patience. In First Timothy, chapter one, in verse 16, Paul is talking about his own conversion.

He says in verse 15 that he was the chief of sinners. But in verse 16, First Timothy 1:16, Paul says, however, for this reason, I obtained mercy that in me, Jesus Christ might show all long suffering. That is the quality of restraint in the face of provocation.

Paul provoked Jesus with his earlier behavior, but Jesus showed restraint. He didn't kill him. He didn't become angry.

It's the opposite of anger. So that in me, that is in my case, in the way God dealt with me first, Jesus Christ might show all long suffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life. Now, to say that Jesus showed long suffering as a pattern for us.

The temptation to say, well, OK, Jesus is our pattern. His long suffering is a pattern of long suffering we're to have. But that's not what Paul's saying.

What Paul's saying is that Jesus long suffering toward Saul of Tarsus is a picture of what God can be. He can be patient toward anybody, toward others who have yet to believe and will believe in the future, that the sinner who feels that he's beyond the reach of the mercy of God and who feels that God must certainly have lost patience with him by now, that sinner can look at the case of Paul and say, well, maybe not. The long suffering of Christ toward Saul of Tarsus, he says, was a pattern for the encouragement of those who have yet to believe that Jesus is still being patient with that he's still showing long suffering toward.

In Romans chapter two and verse four, Paul says, or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance and long suffering? Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. Now, you say that God is patient with you, don't disregard this, don't despise this, don't lightly esteem it. God's patience with you is not intended to be an encouragement to you to keep doing what you're doing.

Do you know God's patience will run out or at least if he doesn't actually lose patience, he'll stop acting patient? Let's put it this way. I don't know if the actual quality of self-restraint ever runs out with God, but certainly his self-restraint runs out and he stops restraining himself and he does punish sinners eventually. In Genesis chapter six and verse three, before the flood, when the thoughts and intentions of men's hearts were only evil continually, God says, my spirit will not always strive with man.

I'm going to give him 120 more years, then I'm going to lower the boom. I'm not going to keep striving forever with man. I'm not going to have patience forever.

There's going to come a time where I'm going to run out of patience or if he didn't

actually run out of patience, he simply acted like he ran out of patience, which is just as bad. Now, the qualities of God's character are virtually all infinite. I mean, it's just kind of by definition.

God is infinite in all his traits. Almost when we talk about God's love or God's mercy or God's justice or God's faithfulness, God's holiness. I mean, we could if we list these traits of God, generally speaking, we can say he's infinite.

He's got infinite love. He's got infinite holiness. He's got infinite faithfulness.

I'm not sure, however, that we could say he's got infinite patience, which would suggest no end to it. There are I mean, maybe he does, and maybe it's only his behavior that looks like he's run out of patience. But the Bible certainly indicates that we shouldn't stretch God's patience because it is something that will appear to run out.

In Second Peter, chapter three, Second Peter, chapter three, tells us in verse three that scoffers will come in the last days walking according to their own lust, saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. In other words, Jesus hasn't come back yet. Hey, I thought he was coming back.

Where is he? You know, where is that promise he made must have fallen through the cracks somewhere. God, maybe maybe he's not coming. But in verse eight, Peter says, But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day.

He can afford to be patient for a long time. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. Some in counts like this, but is long suffering toward us.

The reason Jesus hasn't come back yet is because many people are not ready for him to come back, who will be if he waits a little longer. He's being patient. You know, there were people in the generation before we were born who were praying, Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

But it's good for us that he didn't. There were people 20 years ago praying, Come quickly, Lord Jesus. But it's good for most of you here that he didn't.

Some of you were saved 20 years ago, but most of you, some of you weren't born then. But most of you were alive and most of you probably were not saved 20 years ago. Well, of course, if you're babies could have been.

But the point being, God has reason for being patient. It's not that he's being patient for the sake of the devil or for the sake of the devil's kingdom, as sometimes the devil's kingdom seems to advance given this extra time. But he's being patient on behalf of those who might yet repent.

And that's what he goes on to say in verse nine there. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. Some men count slackness.

Some accuse him of that. But he's long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That's what he's waiting for, for more people to repent so that when he does come, though it vexes and testifies, I'm sure a great deal to be waiting as long as he has.

It's good for many sinners, us included, that he has waited at least this long. But notice verse 10, but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with a fervent heat. Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Now, he's going to come. He's going to judge. He's going to destroy.

His patience will not last forever. He has not come yet because he is long suffering. He's waiting for people to repent, but he's not going to wait forever.

The day of the Lord will come. And when it does, it'll be basically, apparently, annihilation or at least white-hot renovation of the planet. Over in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 21, speaking about that woman Jezebel who was prophesying in the church of Pergamos, excuse me, the church of Thyatira.

And Jesus says of her, I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, but she did not repent. He had patience for a while, but not forever. Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds.

And I will kill her children with death. Now, he's waited. He gave her time to repent.

He was patient for a while, but his patience has run out. Now he's going to strike and it's going to be very, very terrible for those who are on her side and who were unrepentant with her. You know, even Jesus rarely seemed to show signs of growing impatience more than once.

One case I can give you right now for the notes is in Matthew 17 and verse 17. Jesus said, oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me. Now, it doesn't say here that Jesus was impatient, but he's speaking the way that people speak when they're impatient.

How long do I have to put up with you people? How long do I have to bear with you? Now, I'm not saying he lost patience, but from the sound of it, it sounded like his patience was wearing a little thin. And likewise, God's patience eventually reaches an end with sinners. They eventually have to endure his wrath just as he has been enduring their misbehavior.

But God is very patient. His patience is seen in cases like his waiting for the flood. I mean, he predicted the flood when Methuselah was born through the prophet Enoch.

But in fact, he predicted that when Methuselah was dead, the flood would be sent. But when Methuselah died, the flood did come, but Methuselah was allowed to live longer than any other man in history because God was reluctant. God was patient.

He did not want to judge. He eventually did, but he was patient. When God told Abraham in Genesis 15 that someday his descendants would come into Canaan and would slaughter the inhabitants there and would take the land from them, he says, but I'm going to wait 400 years because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Well, these people were offending God every day of their lives, even in that time, but he's going to give them 400 more years to repent. Their iniquity has not quite reached the point where I can't endure it anymore. God is great in patience.

If he could wait 400 years for the Amorites, if he could wait a thousand years, 969 years for the generation before the flood, before striking, he can wait for a lifetime for an individual. And we do find not very many, but some stories of people who resist and rebel against God all the days of their life, and then on their deathbed, the mercy of God comes to them. Now, no one should count on this kind of patience from God because there's no one who's guaranteed more than the next breath.

And if someone says, well, I'll just live for the devil and sow my wild oats and live in sin, and then I'll repent on my deathbed. Some people never have the luxury of a deathbed. Some people may drop dead at the most unexpected time.

It's good to be ready. But the point is that God's patience with people cannot be presumed upon, but it is a marvelous and astonishing degree of patience that he exhibits toward men who provoke him on a daily basis. Now, Colossians 3, 12 said, put on, and then listed some fruit of the spirit, one of which was longsuffering.

Longsuffering is a quality that we are to put on. Now, I will, in another lecture later on, talk about what it means to put on and put off things, because Paul more than once talks about that concept of putting on stuff and putting off stuff. But certainly, it implies that we are to acquire patience.

We won't talk at this moment about the particular procedure, because that will apply to all the fruit of the spirit, and we'll save that for a general consideration. But let's just talk a bit about the kind of patience we are expected to acquire. First of all, let's look at Isaiah chapter 28.

By the way, it's embarrassing for me to talk about patience with my family here, because it's not one of the traits that I am personally eminent in. So I can tell you what the Bible says. I can't necessarily say I'm the exemplar of this trait.

Frankly, I think that there are many people who think themselves to be quite sanctified, because they don't drink, cuss, or chew, and they don't run with girls who do. But there's little problems like envy and impatience and things like that, which are sin and which are not Christlike and which I don't suppose will ever reach the end of our sanctification process. We have areas to grow.

Patience is perhaps one of my weaker traits, I suppose. In Isaiah 28, verse 16, it says, Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not act hastily.

Now, acting hastily is done when you're impatient. Do you have any debt in your life? Did you ever buy anything on credit? Why'd you do that? I have. I have some debt.

And it's been the biggest thorn in my side since I've acquired it. I was fortunate for most of the years of my adult life, I was too poor for anyone to extend credit to me. And one year, I received a large gift from my grandmother.

And I thought, oh, now I could probably qualify this year to get some credit. So a few years back, I got my first credit card. Well, I won't use this to elevate my lifestyle beyond my means.

I buy Christian books a lot. It's one of my major expenses. And you can't buy these through the mail or at least by telephone unless you have a credit card.

So I get a credit card, and I'll just buy a few books every once in a while. And when the bill comes, I'll pay it off. And I won't overextend myself.

But I did. I overextended myself on more than one occasion. Even at the moment, I'm a little overextended, though we're not using our credit cards anymore.

We've torn them up. But there's still some residual debt that's being paid off. But if you have debt, it is because you have acted in haste.

It is because you are not willing to wait. You are not resigned to the will of God. You see, the will of God is for you to purchase something.

As I understand good theology, God will provide for that which he wants you to have. If there is something you want but cannot afford, God has not provided for it yet. He may in the future, but buy it on credit is being impatient.

It's acting with haste. And those who trust in him shall not act hastily, it says here. Now, does that mean Christians never act hastily? Or you're not a Christian if you're acting hastily? No, but you are not trusting God when you act hastily.

If you really believe that God has your best interest at heart, that God will provide for everything you really need and everything he wants you to have, and he'll do so at the

proper time, if you believe that, there's really nothing that would strongly motivate you to go ahead of God on something and get yourself into credit trouble. But that's impatience. It's not really believing at the moment that everything God wants me to have, he's able to or willing to provide for at the moment.

And this is, I think, one of our national symptoms of impatience in our society. And of course, impatience has been cultivated. You know, if the fruit of the spirit is to be cultivated, a patience, well, impatience has been cultivated by the whole lifestyle.

It's certainly no original observation on my part to say that we have to wait for very little anymore. In previous generations, you know, women had to cook all day long. Now they can just stick stuff out of the freezer into the microwave and have dinner ready in a few minutes in many cases.

It used to be that, you know, you'd have to wait for all kinds of things. We have all kinds of instant stuff. You don't even have to percolate coffee anymore.

You can use instant coffee. There's instant everything, almost. And credit is instant acquisition of things that you would otherwise have to wait for.

And everything in our society cultivates an impatience in us by not ever forcing us to wait for anything. I remember when I got my first computer, which was an old Macintosh, which was dreadfully slow. I was amazed initially by the things it could do and think, wow, I can do so many things here that would take so much longer to do by hand.

But it wasn't very long before I was getting very impatient with the computer. Why doesn't this thing move faster? Why do I have to wait for it to go through all these processes before I get the thing on the screen I want, you know? And why does it take so long to boot up? And I'm still that way, you know? I mean, it's an amazing thing. I can probably get work done 10 times faster with the computer I have than I could before we had computers.

But I'm impatient with the computer. It's just not fast enough now. You become acclimated to a certain response time, a certain amount of waiting, and the more people develop things that give us what we want sooner, the less we are accustomed to waiting for anything.

And then we are very poorly equipped to show Christian patience in a situation where my impatience really comes out is in traffic. And again, this is a symptom of our technological age, too. I mean, I can't blame the technological age, but that's what cultivates this in us.

If I lived in an Amish community, or back in the days where everyone used horse and buggy, and I wanted to go somewhere a mile away, or let's put this way, I wanted to go somewhere 10 miles away. I live currently 10 miles from the school. I make the trip back



and forth to my house sometimes three times a day, round trips.

It takes 15 minutes in a car if the traffic's decent. And if it was horse and buggy days, it'd take time to hitch up the wagon, and then it'd take, what would it take? Five, six, seven hours to make the trip? I just figure on waiting. You figure on taking time.

And you're acclimated to that idea. But as soon as we get something like a car, we get used to the idea, hey, I can go 60 miles an hour. I can go a distance in one hour that the pioneers took three days to go in their covered wagons.

And it's an incredible thing. We just, we take it for granted, you know. And of course, we time our departure from home by the expectation that we can go 60 miles an hour to get to where we're going, and we'll get there just in time.

We wait to the last minute because we're accustomed to a certain speed and haste of acquiring our objective. And then when we get behind an old farm truck, a hay truck or something, and they're only going 45, it's intolerably slow. I say we, I should just speak for myself.

I find it intolerably slow because what I've done is I left home at the time. I'm responsible. I know how long it takes me to get there.

And I don't want to waste time getting there early and just, I'm always doing something productive before I leave home. So I'll just do something productive until the last minute, and then I'll count on getting here in 15 minutes, which is how long it generally takes. But when I get behind something that's really slow, and especially if there's no excuse for it, it's just an old decrepit couple poking along in a car that's capable of going full speed, but they're not capable of pushing the accelerator down that far.

I'll tell you, that's when my impatience really shows up. I'll tell you. Or sometimes toward inanimate objects in traffic.

When I hit a red light, every time there's a signal and I'm in a hurry to get somewhere. You know, I figure I'm hitting red lights once in a while, but when there's certain days where you hit every intersection of red light, you say, this is not going to work. I haven't scheduled for this.

And, you know, we're full of impatience. And that's where my growth curve is. That's where I've got to really put on long suffering.

I've got to put on patience. And how do I do that? Well, one thing, you look to the Lord. You as we look at his glory, we're changed from image to image, from glory to glory into his image, I should say.

And, you know, I've got to remember Jesus. We've got to put things back in perspective.

We've got to remember God still is in control.

Not everyone believes this, but I do. If your theology doesn't include this, then you have less reason to be patient. But I believe that God even determines when traffic signals turn red.

Now, you might say, no, come on, that's programmed. That's done with computers and so forth. Of course, that is.

But God's sovereignty in my life has a great deal to say about when I hit that intersection. There's many, many variables. And I believe that those are under God's control.

They can be under mine, too. But I just have this high view of the sovereignty of God. I realize not everyone does.

And they may think what I'm saying is ridiculous. I know my father, one time we were driving to church when I still lived at home. And we got off the freeway and we were running late.

And he wanted to get to church as much on time as possible. And this light at the bottom of the off ramp turned red just as we're coming up to it. And he was, wouldn't you know it, the light turns red.

He was not a swearing man or anything. He's actually quite a patient man in most cases. But he showed some dissatisfaction.

I said, well, dad, don't you think God's in charge of that? Don't you think if God wanted that light to be green, it'd be green. He didn't have much patience with that suggestion. And I'm not sure I was right, but I'm not sure I was wrong either.

I believe that inanimate objects are fully under God's control. And in fact, I even believe that God could cause it to skip a red light if he wants it to be green when you get there. I mean, I believe God's sovereign over those kinds of things.

And if he lets you hit a red light, that's your red light from him. And being impatient, you see, if you believe in the sovereignty of God, at least over the inanimate world, things like that, then you have to realize that to be impatient is a bit rebellious against God's providence. It's rebellion against God's providence in your life.

And so to put things back in right perspective, this is how we cultivate patience by getting our thoughts again out of this rat race situation we find ourselves in and focus on God, his will, his sovereignty, resigning to his will. And there might be some good sense in pre-planning, more time planning for interruptions or whatever, but being impatient is not the Christian response. We need, of course, not only be patient toward just the slow

passage of time and events that we'd like to see go faster, but toward people in particular.

Let me give some scriptures on this, because in the word of a king, there's power. And the power to be patient is elusive at times. And in the word of the king, the scripture says there's power.

So we might as well look at the words of the king, and perhaps they may help us to acquire this trait, just knowing that he's commanding it. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 14, 1 Thessalonians 5, 14, Paul says, Now we exhort you, brethren, to warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, and be patient with all. That's with all people.

Be patient with everyone. Now, being patient with people is sometimes even harder than being patient with a slow computer or a traffic signal that turns around at the wrong time, because people presumably could do something different than what they're doing. You can't really blame the computer.

My computer's given me real problems yesterday. It was freezing up, and I was getting pretty impatient with it, because I was trying to download my email, basically, and before it would ever get to that stage, it just froze. And I had to restart the thing, wait for the whole thing to reboot, and it did it again.

And I started getting impatient. I think, well, this computer can't help it. It's just a piece of junk, you know.

But when a person is being slow, slower than they need to be, and inconveniencing you, that's when it's very tempting, because you think, that rotten guy, he's trying to ruin my day. You know, that guy's just trying to tempt me to rat, see? And of course, that's not generally true. It may be in some cases, but it's generally not true.

But you see, you can blame people for inconvenience. You can't really blame a machine that doesn't have any choice in the matter. And patience with people is, therefore, a little more difficult, but it is even more important, because being patient with people is part of loving your neighbor as you love yourself.

It's part of, as you would that men should do to you, you do likewise to them. You see, patience toward people is part of the whole, it's one of the strands of the fabric of the whole obligation of a Christian to be loving. Because whether we intend to or not, all of us give other people occasion to be impatient with us.

There's a reason why I don't have any Christian bumper stickers on my car. Now, it's not that I'm ashamed at the way I drive. I'm not saying I'm a perfect driver, but I'm not ashamed of the way I drive.

That's my wife. She's ashamed of the way I drive, but I'm not. I'm not embarrassed about that.

But what does concern me is that there are times when even you're doing your best, whereas maybe you're not doing well enough, maybe you're not as attentive as you should be or something, and or someone's in your blind spot, and you pull into a lane you didn't know they were there, and you were looking but didn't see them. But anyway, sometimes through means out of your control, you have occasion to aggravate somebody else. And at those times, I hope they'll be patient with me rather than be angry with me.

And the one reason I don't have Christian bumper stickers is because I don't want them to get angry at Christians in general. Some people say that's just an excuse. It is not.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel or of my car or of my driving. But there are times when I know how I am tempted to be irritated and impatient with people on the road. And sometimes the things that irritate me about them are probably things they don't have any control over either.

I just assume they do and blame them for it. And I know that I want people to be patient toward me when that's necessary. You know, it's sometimes very hard to be patient with people in their spiritual immaturity, people who keep making the same mistake over and over again, especially if it's one that you've outgrown.

You may have the hardest time in the world quitting smoking, but when you finally lick it, it's hard to be patient with others who haven't licked it in some cases. It might be the other way. It depends on how loving you are.

If you're very loving, you might find the fact that you had trouble overcoming smoking incentive to be more patient with people who have trouble with it. But depending on how much grace is in your life, the very thing that you had trouble overcoming your life can be the thing that you can't figure out why, you know, why they can't make the sacrifices you did. Or maybe worse yet, the thing you overcame easily and someone else doesn't.

One thing that changed almost instantly, as near as I can tell it, it did occur instantly when I got filled with the spirit is my anger changed. I was angry. I had a short fuse.

I was quickly angered by many things before I was baptized in the spirit. That is one of the few that changed instantly when I got baptized in the spirit. There are other faults that still haven't changed now, 26 years later.

But one thing that happened instantly is I just never lost my temper again for a very, very long time. Eventually things, you know, when I'm not walking in the spirit, I can still get angry. But as I recall, I marveled, you know, months, years after I was baptized in the spirit that I hadn't gotten angry about anything.

You know, I mean, aggravated. That hasn't, I can't say that's been the case the whole 26 years since. But that was, anger is not a serious problem with me.

Yeah, there are, I do have some problems, but that's not one of them. But some people have a big problem with anger. Some people overcome alcohol or drugs instantly when they're converted, but other people don't.

And there are the things that you got over easily. It's sometimes very hard to be patient with others who aren't getting over them easily. On the one hand, when it's circumstances you have to be patient with, you simply have to be patient with God.

God's in control of circumstances. When it's people you have to be patient with, you have to be loving toward people and you have to give them slack. Now, even if somebody is, has an irritating habit, a sinful habit that you got over easily when you got saved, but they're not finding it easy, realize that they may have gotten over something or never have had a problem with something that you still haven't gotten over.

I mean, you want people to be patient with you and your flaws. And as you would that men do to you, you do to them. Likewise.

So being patient with people is simply part of loving them in a biblical way. In 2nd Timothy and chapter 4 verse 2, Paul says, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort without long suffering and teaching. When you rebuke people or convince, convict someone or confront them, when you exhort them, it's obvious that there's something wrong with them.

It's something they're doing wrong and you want to correct them. You see the need to correct them, but you need to do it with patience. You do it with a long suffering.

The very fact that you're exhorting or rebuking them means that they are doing something that is wrong, probably irritating, something that is maybe not very tolerable and therefore they have to be corrected. But though they may be doing something that's irritating and intolerable and must be corrected, it must be done in patience, as Paul tells us here. Also, the Bible exhorts us to be patient with God.

I said earlier that when circumstances aren't going our way and we have to be patient, that too is being patient with God. But I was talking in those cases of just things where we were made to wait. I wasn't talking about perseverance.

I was just talking about maintaining your cool while being made to wait an inconvenience. If the inconvenience is elevated to the status of an actual affliction, of actual pain, suffering, torture even, to endure that with the same grace is nothing less than being patient with God, waiting for God to come and change the situation. And we should realize, as I said, that being impatient is rebellion against God.

Being patient toward people is lack of love toward them. Being patient toward your circumstances is lack of love toward God, and it is rebellion against his providence. Unless you don't believe that his providence is capable of turning the situation around in his good time.

And if you don't believe, you've got sub-Christian theology, I think, sub-biblical. But if you believe that God can turn circumstances around and he hasn't, then what are you complaining about? You're complaining about God. You're complaining about his providence in your life.

In Psalm 40, verses one and two, David said, I waited patiently for the Lord. And he inclined to me and heard my cry. He also brought me up from a horrible pit out of the miry clay and set my feet on a rock and established my steps.

If you're in a horrible pit, you really want your feet out of there and into a solid place. But he had to wait patiently for the Lord. The Lord did come through.

He did remove his afflictions. He did deliver them out of them, but not instantly, not before he had to wait patiently for the Lord. And that's what we're called upon to do, to wait for God, to have patience with God.

In Romans chapter eight, in verse 25, we have another scripture relevant to this point. Romans 8, 25, Paul says, but if we hope for what we do not see, in this case, we're hoping for the Lord to come, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance, that is with endurance, patience. We wait for it with perseverance.

Now, notice he says, we eagerly wait for it. You might think that when I say you need to be patient, you just kind of have to stop being eager. Just kind of cool down and not be interested in the thing you're waiting for, or just get your mind on something else, distract yourself, you know, just give up your interest in the thing for the time being until it happens.

No, you can eagerly wait for it. Eagerness seems to work against patience. If I'm eager for something to happen, as opposed to ambivalent or apathetic about it, it's harder to be patient.

But it is possible to be eagerly waiting for deliverance, but with perseverance, that is with the grace as you endure with a happy heart. OK, one other important passage in the New Testament on being patient and enduring under under hardship, persecution and so forth, is in James chapter five. James chapter five, verses seven and eight, he says, Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until he receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Be patient and establish your hearts. Dig in. Put your roots down.

Don't let yourself be moved. Abide under the circumstances until he comes. Just like a farmer patiently waits for the right fruit.

Do you know? Do you believe the farmer is eager to see the harvest? Do you think the farmer is eager to see the fruit ripen so he can take it and make his living with it? Of course he is. But he has to patiently wait for it. He can't speed it up by being impatient.

Therefore, he simply has to resign himself to God's timing. And the Christian is willing to do that will find that while they're doing so, they're being patient. That's simply what patient seems to consist in.

The Bible indicates that as we wait in this way for the Lord, we receive strength for the wait. And we sang about that tonight. I don't recall.

I think it might be the last song we sang tonight. It's very well known scripture in Isaiah 40. Thank you.

And Isaiah chapter 40. And verse 31, it says, those who wait on the Lord shall renew the strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint to run without getting tired is figurative. But it means that what they must accomplish, they can do without running out of reserves.

Those who wait on the Lord. Those who are patiently waiting on God for his timing. If they wait patiently, if they wait quietly before the Lord, they will renew their strength.

Actually, in the Hebrew, that means they will exchange their strength. They will exchange their little strength for his great strength. And therefore, you receive strength by being patient and waiting on God.

Another song that we sing. Actually, I don't know if we've sung it this year or not, but sometimes we sing it. Psalm 27, 14.

Psalm 27, 14 says, wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say on the Lord. Both of these passages, Isaiah 40, 31 and Psalm 27, 14, say that if we wait on the Lord, in one place, as we will renew our strength or exchange our strength for his.

And in this case, it says he will strengthen your heart. You will receive strength to wait, because as Paul said, he prays that God would strengthen us with his mighty power for endurance and longsuffering with joy. It requires his strength, his power, his spirit to produce this fruit.

But obviously, if we are commanded to put on longsuffering, if we're commanded to pursue it, if we're commanded to do it and to be it, then it is our decision. It is God's product. It is the spirit's product in our life, but it is our decision to receive patience at the moment when we're tempted to be impatient, to restore our perspective to what it should be, realizing that it's God that we're rebelling against if we're impatient with circumstances, or it's our brother that we're being unloving toward if we're impatient toward people.

And if we walk in love and in resignation to the will of God, then these things will eliminate impatience from our lives and will produce and cultivate the fruit of patience. Well, that's almost all that I wanted to say. Not quite, but it's enough and we've run out of time, so we'll end right there.