

Macrothumia (Patience)

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[0 : 00] Well, tonight we are in the final part of our series which is called Five Cool Greek Words and over the last few weeks we've been learning five very cool Greek words which is the language that the New Testament was written in.

And the reason we're doing that is because I'm hoping that we'll see that learning the Greek word itself gives us just a little bit of a deeper understanding of what God is saying and that deeper understanding helps us to apply the Gospel to our lives more and more.

So the five Greek words that we've been learning are Homo logeo, affi eimi, lo gizomai, patria and makrothumia.

We started with this word Homo logeo, which is the Greek word for confess and it literally means say the same thing and it's teaching us that when we confess our sins to God we're just we are saying the same thing, we are never surprising Him, we don't need to hide anything, we confess before Him, He knows and He's dealt with it through His Son, our Lord Jesus.

And also as a church together we want to confess the same faith so that we're saying the same thing we're holding on to the beautiful unchanging truths of the Gospel.

[1 : 21] Second word is affi eimi, affi eimi which is the Greek word, well it's a kind of broad word but it's the word for forgive. It's also can mean other things, it can mean leave behind, it can mean let go, it can mean grant permission and it's reminding us that forgiveness involves leaving it behind.

So God leaves us in behind, He forgets, He lets go and in the same way in our interactions with others and when people wrong us and hurt us we need to be ready to let it go, to leave it behind, to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Third word was logizomai which is we have kind of same word family where we get the word logic and it speaks of the beautiful logic that lies at the heart of the Gospel.

The actual word, it's translated in various ways, we looked at it when it's the word count so our sin is not counted against us and there's this glorious exchange we're just counted to Jesus placed upon Him and there's this glorious exchange we're just in a beautiful logical way, our sin is counted to Jesus, His righteousness imputed to us, all the damage of the that's been caused by sin is undone, every single detail dealt with.

Last time we looked at this word patria which is the Greek word for family but we were saying that literally that word is a fatherdom and it's speaking of the idea that if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian you have the amazing privilege of becoming a child of the Father, a child of God the Father and it's reminding us that we have that amazing status of having God as our Father and we all share the same Father so the Fatherhood of God establishes and secures the unity of the Church.

[3 : 16] So we've learned four of our five words, tonight we are on our last word which is this word macrothumia so we're learning a little bit how to pronounce Greek letters you may have so you might have picked up by now that this funny U shape is actually the Greek word for M and then A, K the one that looks like a P is actually an R so macro and then the big circle with the line through is the sound so they've got we have TH but in Greek you just have one letter and then U and then Mia again so macrothumia and we read it and Marie read it in 1 Timothy 1 15 to 16 the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost but I received mercy for this reason that in me the foremost Christ Jesus might display his perfect patience as an example to those who are to believe in him for eternal life.

Which word is macrothumia? It's that word the Greek word for patience and I might have actually mentioned this word before in other sermons because it's one of my favorite words of all and a little bit like homologate I would have had all the words it's really good for us to think about what the

word literally means this word is like homologate because it's in two halves a compound word so macro and thumia are two different halves macro is the Greek word for long and thumia is a word that's related to the idea of like our mind our temperament our thinking so literally this word means long thinking long minded long tempered and so we translated patience and it's such a helpful word for us to think about and I want us to explore two headings the danger of short thinking the beauty of long thinking so first of all the danger of long thinking that's basically another way of saying that impatience can be bad for us and that idea of impatience can actually have two forms because when we talk about being impatient first of all there's the idea of being short tempered and there's a sense in which macrothumia is the opposite of being short tempered short tempered long tempered the two are kind of an opposite in that regard so we are often like that ourselves or we see it in others something annoys us we react and we maybe say something or do something that will hurt others and that we will regret and that kind of behaviour can be very very harmful it's very harmful for the person who's on the receiving end of it so if you have been at work this week or you've been in amongst people and you've been on the receiving end of someone being impatient or short tempered that's a horrible thing to have to go through likewise when Christians do this it's very damaging to our witness so as we go about our daily lives we can very often find ourselves in situations where we can be short tempered where we can react badly to situations and it's actually very interesting that you know if I was in a busy airport and the plane gets cancelled or if I'm standing in the ferry terminal waiting to go on there's loads of people there and it gets cancelled the way I react in that moment talking about me personally that is probably going to have more public influence than my sermons because not many people listen to my sermons but in the airport if I reacted badly to something like that and people know that it's the minister or a Christian who's doing that it can have a very damaging effect on our witness so that idea of impatience in terms of being short tempered is a really important thing for us to think about it's not easy to interact with people when they behave like that and so there's lots of very practical lessons there but I'm sure you all know that and I'm sure I don't really need to tell you that and what I want to focus on is maybe the other way another way that impatience or short thinking can be dangerous and that second way in which impatience can show itself is not so much about being short tempered and ratty it's more about being short termist in our thinking in other words we can so easily be short minded in our thinking and that will have a huge effect on our choices and those choices can have a very serious effect on our spiritual well being and that's so incredibly important for anybody who is maybe not yet a Christian anyone here or anyone watching at home who is not yet a Christian and it's massively important because short term thinking short thinking is probably one of the most common thought processes that will lead people to either reject the gospel or put off following Jesus and it happens in lots of ways to give you a couple of examples people will decline the offer of eternal life because they don't want short term inconvenience they decline eternal life because they don't want short term inconvenience so some people might feel that if I become a Christian if I follow Jesus it's going to impact my routine too much it's going to cost me time effort energy it's going to leave it's going to mean leaving behind certain patterns of behavior that the world around us might celebrate but that God I know forbids people also decline the offer of eternal peace because they don't want short term discomfort eternal peace rejected because they don't want short term discomfort so often people are anxious that they're going to get spoken about or they're going to get labeled or people are worried about how family or friends or colleagues might react if you become a Christian and in a similar way people decline the offer of eternal security because they don't want short term uncertainty and so maybe people maybe even some of you are thinking I want to be a Christian I want to I want to become a member of the church I want to go forward in this direction but I'm anxious about what will happen will I be able to keep going will I make a mistake what if what if things change what if I don't cope what if God calls me to a new job or a new location what if I have to get involved and serve in a way that I feel really anxious about doing so and because of that short term uncertainty people think I just push God away now at one level I want to acknowledge that feeling like that is not ridiculous and those kind of anxieties are not groundless or irrational but will mean that people will treat you badly that can happen and so you're not crazy if you have those fears but you are crazy if you let those fears become the reason for pushing Jesus away and for that short thinking to be the basis on which you reject eternal life and and I guess I don't think I need to persuade you that if we just think about it we realize that it's such a foolish thing to do because we are sacrificing the long-term eternal security

and peace of the gospel all because of a short term thing that's never ever as important as where you're going to spend eternity never ever forget that the devil never comes to you with long thinking devil never comes to you offering you the long term because the only thing that the devil has got to offer anybody for the long term is hell and nobody wants that instead he will try and lure you away from the gospel with short thinking put it off leave it it'll inconvenience you it'll spoil things it'll muck things up muck things up and he's using that short thinking to lure people away from Jesus please do not listen to him please think long think long think about eternity and please listen to Jesus as he calls you again to come and trust in him so it's really important to think about the danger of short thinking if anyone's not yet a Christian or not sure but it's also very important for us as Christians to recognize the danger of short thinking because short thinking can lead us to make some very bad choices and you see examples of that in the chapter that we read look again at verse 8 to 10 there's this is one of these examples where you have lists of sins that often come up in Paul's letters he's talking about the law being for the disobedient for the ungodly and sinners for the unholy and profane for those who strike their fathers and mothers for murderers the sexually immoral men practice homosexuality enslavers liars perjurers whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine what I just wanted to highlight is that that so often it is short thinking that's going to lead people into these so take sexual immorality for an example whether that's looking at pornography or whether it's sleeping with people outside marriage it happens when that short-term craving overcomes you same with lying and that that's so often to get immediate gain to get out of a sticky situation it's to get a get a solution for a short-term problem to lie our way out of a corner and even the violence that's described there you see kind of like awful descriptions of domestic violence and even of murder so often those acts of violence that we see regularly in our own society around us they are the result of short thinking I don't think

anybody gets up in in the morning and thinks you know oh my plan for this week is to be violent to my family nobody thinks that nobody makes that their plan for life and yet in that moment of rage and frustration people act and do awful things without thinking through the long-term consequences now many of what Paul much of what Paul's describing here is stuff that is a sins that that most Christians will avoid and we're so thankful for God's grace in that regard but the point still applies that this pattern of short thinking leading to bad decisions is a trap that we can all fall into a thousand times in the week ahead and it's reminding us that the Christian should have a long-term mindset a Christian should have a long-term mindset in fact long thinking can be one of the best ways to overcome temptation so we face temptation to sin in whatever way it might be whether it's to lie or whether it's temptation with pornography or whatever it might be temptation to be greedy to be selfish to to overreact to be angry whatever temptation it is one of the best ways to to overcome that temptation is to think long I don't know if this is a silly example but a good example a good illustration of that for me is eating a takeaway so when we get a takeaway as a family love takeaway love food so we get a takeaway I eat my plate it's fantastic then around me it's not so much now but certainly when my children were younger around me after I finished my plate is a pile of half finished plates and I'm thinking I want to eat them as well and there's many a time I have eaten them and I have gone from feeling absolutely satisfied at the end of my plate to feeling ill at the end of my plate and everybody else's half plate and and the thing about it is that if I think short if I'm sitting there and there's a half empty plate of chicken or curry beside me if I think short I'm going to eat it because I just can't resist it the only way I can resist it is to think long to think I'm going to be awake in the middle of the night feeling sick if I eat this and that helps me to then overcome the temptation now maybe that's a silly example maybe it's an example that we can all relate to it's all reminding us that thinking longer is a really good way to overcome temptation in fact it's a good prayer to pray when you're tempted Lord help me to see the long-term consequences of the thing that right now is really tempting me so we're learning lots of good lessons as Christians about the danger of how short thinking can lead us into sin there's one other important thing that arises from this chapter in relation to the danger of short thinking that I want us to look at before we move on that's what you see in verses three to four Paul says I urge you when I was going to Macedonia remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculation rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith what I want us to think a wee bit about is this is this statement here that Paul says remain at Ephesus now we don't know all the details of what was going on but clearly there's difficulties for the church in Ephesus there are false teachers and the fact that Paul is saying remain at Ephesus is a very very strong indication that Timothy was tempted

to leave and I think that's reinforced by the fact that later on Paul talks and then later in the chapter he talks about fighting the good fight of faith and it's all highlighting the fact that as Timothy is pastoring a congregation in Ephesus he's facing the the problem of these [17:53] false teachers who are leading people astray they're a threat they're a difficulty they're causing division and it looks as though in those moments Timothy wants to leave and I think that that's very likely to be true not simply because of the evidence in the letter but also because I think that's how I would feel when opposition and trouble comes into our lives because of our faith it's so easy to feel like running away but to do that is to succumb to short thinking now obviously there are times when fleeing is the right thing to do if you read about Paul in Acts chapter 17 you'll see that he had to flee from Thessalonica and he had to flee from Berea and it was the right thing to do but sometimes like at this moment Timothy is told to stay in Ephesus sometimes we have to stand strong in the face of trouble short-term thinking can lead us to want to avoid trouble and when it appears we want to just run away or move on or avoid it long thinking stands firm holds fast and fights the good fight of faith and so as you go into this week as a Christian there might be things that you have to endure things that you don't want to do things that you would so much rather avoid and you will need God's strength to endure there might be situations where you have to dig in and think I feel so uncomfortable just now but I am going to keep looking to Jesus and I'm going to stand strong and by his grace I'll get through it there might be moments when you feel the cost of discipleship short thinking will tell you to avoid it long thinking will tell you that it's worth it so short thinking is dangerous in patients can lead to bad choices and the gospel is calling us to a much better way of thinking and that takes us on to our second point the beauty of long thinking now in many ways this is just kind of the counterpart of everything that we've said all the bad examples of short thinking highlight the value of patience and the value of being long-minded so if somebody gets in your nerves at work you need macro-thumia in the long term you don't want to be the one who loses your temper your children are unwell you need macro-thumia it's hard and tiring but you want to be the one that your children know will take care of them you're struggling with pain and illness you need macro-thumia one day

God will take all of that pain away you're confused about what's happening in your life you need macro-thumia God is in control his plans are perfect he will fulfill his purposes for you and in a thousand other ways patience macro-thumia is such a helpful and beneficial and wise mindset for us all to cultivate but as we think about the beauty of long thinking I want us to focus on the fact that in verses 15 to 16 the macro-thumia that Paul speaks about it's not Irish it's his it's Jesus is perfect patience and it's reminding us that macro-thumia is a beautiful attribute of God now in these verses Paul has actually been speaking about his own past I've added on verses 13 and 14 and he describes himself as the worst of sinners in the old-fashioned language this phrase was the chief of sinners of which I am the chief I am the foremost of sinners and in response to Paul's you'll I'm sure many of you will remember Paul's background he was a persecutor of the church zealous Pharisee wanted to do everything that he could to stop Christians and to get this message wiped off the face of the planet and in response to Paul's aggression his arrogance and his outright hostility to the gospel God showed him amazing patience

God's view of Paul was long-term and he's saying that that Jesus showed his perfect patience in me the chief of sinners in fact you see this very clearly in Paul's actual conversion in Acts chapter nine it's really interesting that when Saul was traveling to Damascus he meets with Jesus he's blinded he's led into Damascus and then the Lord calls Ananias a Christian there to go and see him and says to him rise go to the street called straight at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsish named Saul for behold he's praying he's seen a vision he's seen a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight and Ananias says to God are you crazy I've heard about this man and how he wants to kill us and put us in prison all the evil that he's done but the Lord says to him go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the nations and kings and the children of Israel there's an amazing contrast Ananias hears about Paul Saul as he was known then and thinks this is immediate danger short term he's thinking no way God says go because my plans for him are long God was thinking long in the life of Saul and that long thinking of God is really what lies at the very heart of the gospel and I just want to highlight two key things in the last couple of minutes and before we finish number one macro Thumia tells us that God has been thinking of you important to remember the roots of the gospel they lie way way back they lie in what theologians will call God's eternal decree which is just

another way of saying the things that God has wanted forever and from all eternity
God has set his heart on his people he set his heart on you and he sent his son to save you and those people whom Jesus has come to save are sinners as Paul himself says in verse 15 and that sin is a gross offense to God it's a flagrant rejection of our creator it's a violation of his commands it's a rebellion against his rule it is totally incompatible with his perfect perfect and beautiful holiness that word sinners is such a massive massive problem and yet God responds with macro Thumia that's so important to remember our sin deserves immediate and eternal condemnation God has the right to walk away from us and never think of us again but he doesn't but he doesn't instead he responds with mercy and grace and perfect patience elsewhere the New Testament describes this in the language of forbearance you've got this in Romans chapter 3 verses 23 God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve he doesn't respond with immediate and irreversible condemnation in other words God is never ever short-tempered instead he acts according to his long thinking sending his son to be the propitiation by his blood showing his righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins in God's eternal decree in his long thinking he sees you he sees you in your sin he sees you in your desperate need he sees your helplessness and hopelessness on your own and he responds in grace and that grace leads to action and that action is what the gospel is all about it's planned in eternity it's foreshadowed in the

[26 : 25] Old Testament it's fulfilled in the new it's all centered on God the Son himself leaving heaven taking up our human nature becoming one of us enduring all the temptations and hostilities of a fallen world despised and rejected by the people he came to save he went to the cross he went willingly and he endured the agony he despised the shame he was exposed to the wrath of God he dies with all the weight of my sin and your sin on his shoulders and it's all because God's thoughts for you are long God's love for you is long long long and that is why if you are not yet a Christian he has brought you here tonight to tell you I'm still waiting I'm still holding out my arms for you God has been thinking about you for a long long time but not only has God been thinking of you for a long long time his plans for you are for the long long term and that's one of the most amazing things about the gospel it doesn't just fix our past it also transforms our future God has amazing plans for you just as he had amazing plans for Paul converted on the road to Damascus just as he hasn't had amazing plans for Timothy so too he has amazing plans for you now for Paul and Timothy and for so many other Christians those plans didn't mean that life would always be easy and it didn't mean that they wouldn't make mistakes the same is true for us as we follow Jesus there's so so much that we need to learn we'll still make mistakes along the way there'll be doubts and fears and uncertainty there'll be times when we feel strong there'll be times when we feel so weak and so useless but in all of those ups and downs and mistakes and wobbles as you follow Jesus what is God's mindset towards you? Macrothumia perfect beautiful patience and that's really what lies behind the doctrine of sanctification that process whereby bit by bit

God the Holy Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus God the Holy Spirit does that because his plans for you are for the long long term and that's why the Christian pretty much never experiences instant results and that's why so often it's actually only by looking back in your life that you'll see her God has helped you to grow and has led you and guided you he's always working according to his long long thinking but that those that long thinking doesn't just apply to your life now it actually stretches even further than that God's thinking is longer than life on this earth God's plans originate in eternity that's where they find their destination that's where Jesus wants you to be with him in heaven forever and ever and he's patiently waiting for the day when he will take you home just think about that look at the next verse verse 17 the king of ages the one who's immortal invisible the only God the one who deserves all glory and honor he's patiently waiting to take you home to be with him forever and on our own we would give all of that up for the silly fleeting short term pleasures of this world but God is so so amazing in his grace and mercy that he did not give up on you he didn't give up on me he came to seek us to reach us to rescue us and to make us his own forever and if you feel if you feel rubbish or worthless or like you are so far from what God wants you to be then you need to remember this amazing word you need to remember the word macrothumia you need to remember that God's thinking for you is long it reaches past your mistakes past your regrets past your feelings past your doubts past everything that you feel ashamed of his perfect patience is always long enough and so if as a Christian or if you're somebody who doesn't you're not sure or not whether you're a Christian if you feel like your prayer life is rubbish if you feel like you're so

useless at praying

God responds to that with macrothumia with patience to say look just forget it and just talk to me because i'm listening if you are battling with doubts if you're thinking i am not sure about all of this i am doubting how does God respond he meets you with macrothumia he's saying look i will help you with your doubts if you feel you've badly stuffed up in your life God stands by your side with macrothumia he says i'm not leaving because i'm long thinking if you feel weak and useless and confused God is holding you in his arms with eternal unending macrothumia never ever think that God's patience has run out whether you're a Christian who often stumbles or you're not yet a Christian but you know that you need Jesus the whole reason you're hearing the gospel again tonight is because his patience runs long in the beauty beauty of the gospel is rooted in the beauty of God's long thinking so that's five cool greek words that we have learned over these past few weeks and i hope that it's been helpful and to do them the last thing i want to say is that there's actually a deliberate order in these because in many ways these five words describe what happens to everyone who becomes a Christian we confess our sins to God homologate acknowledging lord i know i'm a sinner what does he do in respond he forgives them aphiemi they're gone they're left behind and that can happen because he does not counter sin against us instead christ's righteousness is placed on us the cross deals with everything and as our sins are forgiven as christ's righteousness is placed upon us we are brought into the family the fatherdom of god his children united together and at his fatherhood and we press on together we grow in grace as he loves us and cares for us with his perfect macro themia homologate aphiemi logism my patria macro themia those greek words are cool because the gospel is so cool i mean let's