

The Fruit of the Spirit - Patience

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I would like us to turn back to the passage that we read and as I said we are continuing our study today on the fruit of the Spirit. We'll read again at Galatians 5 verse 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. We've been working our way through these various elements highlighted by Paul and today we come to patience. Now as we've been saying throughout this study, the fruit of the Spirit is outlining the effect and the evidence of having God the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart. Fruit is something that reflects what you are on the inside and it's something that's manifestly visible on the outside. Therefore, as Christians we should all be characterised by patience.

Now I should probably say at the beginning that you are all very, already abundantly patient because your minister often runs over time a little bit so you're very good at patience already. But it's a good thing for us to study and to learn together because patience is something that we should constantly be showing and striving to have in our lives.

Now today we're going to start by learning a Greek word. Now I'm not supposed to do this, they always say never ever ever show Greek words in a service but you are all very clever so I think you'll be fine. The Greek word that Paul uses is *macrothumia* and it's a compound word, it's two words joined together and it's a fascinating word because it really helps us to understand what lies at the heart of patience. Now I'm sure many of you recognise the first part *macro*, that's a word that we use in English, it's the Greek word for long and so it expresses the idea of length, of distance, of something maybe being far off so we'll talk about things like macroeconomics when you're thinking about a nation's economy as a whole you would refer to that as macroeconomics. You have the contrast between *macro* and *micro*, it's a word that we're fairly familiar, basically means long. Now *thumia* is the Greek word for soul or for spirit or for mind, that's the word it's related to so basically this word for patience that Paul uses means long sold, you're long sold, long minded and that is emphasising the fact that basically what this word means is that patience is the frame of mind that takes a long term view. When you think of patience you need to be thinking long term view and it's with this in mind that I want us to spend a bit of time thinking together about patience and we're going to do it in two parts, first of all we're going to just spend some time thinking about what this teaches us about God and then we'll spend a little bit of time applying it to ourselves but in all of this we have to have this idea clearly in our minds patience is to have a long term way of thinking. When we start at the study on the fruit of the spirit we reminded ourselves the fact that the fruit of the spirit is the fruit of God the Holy Spirit, it is the fruit of God and all of these things are a reflection of God's character and so when the fruit when it tells us that part of the fruit of the spirit is patience it's reminding us that patience is one of the many glorious attributes of God. Various verses remind us of that we read Samandran 3 at the very beginning the Lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding instead fast love that's a picture of patience. 2 Peter 3 9 the Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you. Now at the heart of God's patience is the fact that God takes a long term view and this stands in glorious contrast to the world because our society our world life today is incredibly short term in its thinking and we know that that is true in so many different areas whether it's in terms of fashion what we wear or in terms of technology things change so quickly arts things that are wonderful wondering in terms of music the most popular band in the world can be nobody in two or three years time and even in the news our thinking seems to be very very short term not that long ago our news was dominated by the conflict in Ukraine and it was dominated by the Greek economy and yet now as far as I can tell these things are hardly mentioned although as far as I know I don't think the situations have improved much at all so our world is really really short term in its thinking but God stands in beautiful contrast because God is a long term thinker and if we remember that it helps us to appreciate just how glorious God is

and this long term thinking of God is reflected in many of the key doctrines that lie at the heart of the Christian faith now when I use the word doctrine we're just basically referring to the key teachings that are at the heart of the Bible and there are many of them I've selected a few that we can see these are some of the key doctrines in the Christian faith effectual calling regeneration adoption sanctification union with Christ that's five fundamentally vitally important theological doctrines we're going to look at these in turn because at the heart of all of these is the fact that God is patient first of all let's look at effectual calling now this is where the catechism is very very helpful we have the shorter catechism it's just a list of questions and answers that that give us explanations of key questions a wonderful document written just under 400 years ago but still incredibly useful so question 31 in the short of catechism is what is effectual calling the answer is you can see it there effectual calling is the work of God's spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel and so the basic principle behind effectual calling is that God calls us to himself that's what the message of the gospel is a call an invitation God calls us and at the heart of that is the fact that God has a long term view because he calls us patiently because how many of us responded the very first time we heard the gospel some people do but for many of us we hear the gospel goes in one ear out the other often we're stubborn stubborn we're reluctant we procrastinate we leave it we think oh no no no and yeah God's calling me but I'll leave it for now

I'll leave it for now and so we can so often receive God's call and yet we push it away but thank God that he is patient because he calls us patiently and even if you have put it off a thousand times in your life God's calling you again and he says come now let's reason together says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they are red like crimson they shall be like wool God is saying come come come come and as long as you have breath in your lungs God will keep on calling you and so at the heart of effectual calling is the fact that God is patient the same as true of regeneration the next doctrine this is what we mean when we say that you must be born again the fact that when you come to faith in Jesus Christ it's a new birth regeneration created reborn as Jesus said himself you must be born again and when we do put our faith in Jesus Christ we become spiritually alive sin leaves us spiritually dead but Christ reverses that and brings us to life as Jesus himself as it says in 1 John 5 1 everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God now one of the great things that are that's been shown to us by this image of birth is the fact that it is the start of a never ending relationship birth is the start of a long long term bond between parent and child because if you think about it your mother is your mother forever now sometimes that relationship might be damaged sometimes well it will eventually be separated by death but the connection is permanent because I don't know who Winston Churchill's mother was but but whoever Winston Churchill's mother was is still Winston Churchill's mother and always will be it's a long term permanent permanent bond and that's why even when families are broken they can be restored because there is a permanent permanent bond and so the doctrine of regeneration is the start of a beautiful long term relationship between the believer and God God's thinking is long term and that's highlighted by the next doctrine adoption again the catechism helps us here what is adoption adoption is an act of free God's free grace whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God when we become a Christian we don't just simply become saved human beings or repaired human beings we become the beloved children of God God is now our father and that means that he is totally committed to his children for the long long term and that's reflected in how God deals with us because God patiently teaches us God lovingly provides for us God guides us God protects us God even disciplines us like any good parent disciplines their children and all of that is because of his long term love for you if you think about adoption there is one thing about true about adoption it is absolutely permanent when it

[12 : 03] comes to adoption there is no going back no going back at all and so when God makes you his child he says this is permanent there is never going to be any going back you are my child for the long term God is always thinking in this long term way the next doctrine is sanctification key part of our faith this is God's will for you your sanctification again what is it sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die on to sin and to live unto righteousness basically it's saying God makes us more and more and more like Jesus and at the heart of that is the fact that God is patient because sanctification by definition is a long term process day by day by day God the Holy Spirit is shaping you shaping me changing you changing me making us more and more like Jesus and it is a glorious reminder of the fact that God's plans for you are long term because we are so often discouraged by the fact that we make mistakes and that we fail and we muck up and we feel immensely frustrated now the world tends to be ruthless with people who make mistakes you look at politics somebody makes a mistake there's calls for their resignation and their career is over you look even at football manager you can be a hero like Claudio Ranieri one year and nine months later you're sacked and even friendships can be ruined by one mistake now as Christians we make mistakes I make mistakes every one of us does but thanks be to God that he's patient he is incredibly patient and his doctrine of sanctification is a long term doctrine and God can and will keep on working in you to make you all that he wants you to be so think about how you've mucked up in the past week maybe you lost your cool maybe you forgot to do something like I did as I remember this morning but I forgot to do something I have to tell my poor treasure after church that I forgot to do something maybe you got overwhelmed by worry maybe you've said something you shouldn't have or maybe somebody let you down maybe something went wrong in the past week maybe you've made mistakes in the past week how does God react to that what does God think of you this morning when you come in here having mucked up in the past week is he here to wrap your knuckles or to scold you or to keep your arms length of course not because he's patient and God says I am never giving up on you ever and I am committed to you for the long term and I am a patient patient father and so it's a great reminder that the Christian is never expected to just get on with it rather

God is totally committed to working in us to helping us to leading us and to making us all that he wants to be so at the heart of effectual calling of regeneration of sanctification is God's glorious patience and it's all really summed up by the final doctrine union with Christ this is really the one that sums it all up as Christians we are gloriously united to Jesus Christ this is really the core doctrine of the Christian faith that by faith we are united to Jesus as he said himself I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing as Paul constantly reminds us we are in Christ and that union between you and Jesus Christ as a Christian is for the long long term listen to what Jesus says in John 17 this is where Jesus is praying to his father the glory that you have given me I have given to them that's to his people to you that they may be one even as we are one I in them and you in me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you've sent me and love them even as you love me father I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you've given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world that means that when God looks at you as a Christian he will never ever be impatient because you are united to his son you are his very own God's love towards you is long long term and all of this is reminding us of a key biblical word a wonderful biblical word and that is the word covenant at the heart of the Bible is the fact that God deals with us in terms of a covenant relationship if you look back into the Old Testament you see God entered a covenant with his people and the New Testament is the fulfillment of all that in terms of the New Covenant mediated by Jesus Christ that's really what the word

Testament means you could just as legitimately call the Bible the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Covenant is at the heart of it. God's relationship with us is a covenant relationship and if there is one thing through of a covenant relationship is long term and so at the very core of God's being is the fact that he is patient and at the very heart of his relationship with us is the fact that he is beautifully gloriously patient and thinking in the long term and how thankful how thankful we should be that God is patient and I really want you when you think of God to think and remember the fact that he is patient because it's so easy to misunderstand God and it's so easy to misunderstand our circumstances when something bad happens to us we think that God has abandoned us and yet the Bible is telling us that God is using every single circumstance of our lives to do his patient loving work in us and that's why the New Testament tells us that we can even rejoice when we suffer we can even rejoice when we suffer not only that but we rejoice in our suffering says Paul in Romans 5 knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us do you see what that is saying just saying that when something difficult happens in your life as a Christian God is not abandoning you God is not neglecting you in fact God is pouring his love into you and we just have to think in the long term in order to see that and so if we do make mistakes we may be overwhelmed by a sense of failure we might think that God is disgusted with us we might think that God has just fed up and has lost patience with the fact that we make mistakes but God is always a perfectly patient father and he is totally committed to his children that's why he calls us back to himself he calls us to repent he promises to forgive and he says I will never leave you nor forsake you and so God is telling us all today he's saying I am with you for the long term so patience is an amazing attribute of God and really it lies at the heart of so much of God's dealings with us but Galatians 5 is reminding us that if God himself this patient God if he dwells in us by his spirit then this fruit of patience should manifest itself in our lives every single Christian should be characterised by patience now that's something that we should do but it's something that's not easy to do sometimes it's hard to be patient and some people are less patient than others and it makes us ask the question how do we do it how are we going to show this kind of patience in our lives well the answer is to remember the word we learned at the beginning to make sure we always have a long term view and that applies in many ways I'm just going to mention three briefly in the last few minutes first of all we've touched on this already

we are to be patient in suffering that's one of the great emphases of the New Testament that though tribulation comes we are to be patient Paul himself who wrote Galatians speaks about this in terms of his own experience we can read 2nd Timothy 3 10 you however have followed my teaching my conduct my aim in life my faith my patience my love my steadfastness my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch and Iconium and at Lystra which persecutions I endured yet from them all the Lord rescued me as Christians we will face trials but we must always be patient under trial now that might be lots of things might be an illness and maybe that's your own experience today it might be pressure at work would you seems to be true of so so many people when burdens are heavy on you might be at home worries concerns maybe a disappointment maybe a bereavement maybe you like Paul are being persecuted maybe false accusations are being thrown against you all of these things are things that Paul and his fellow Christians endured and these things are hard they're incredibly hard but if we have a long term view then we can endure therefore in the short term our trials might bruise us and hurt us and leave us weary but in the long term God is sanctifying us he is refining us and he is making us more and more like

Jesus as a Christian how many things in your life is God working for your good how many things all things that's what Romans 8 tells us all things and the only way to see that is to think long term in the short term our experiences can be frustrating they can be discouraging but in the long term what we experience now can enable us to help and support others in the future so your struggles today might just be the training ground for helping someone else tomorrow and in the short term life can be stressful it can be sorrowful it can be lonely it can be hard but God is telling us to think of the long term because in the long long term God is promising us eternal rest and perfect peace so we are to be patient and suffering we're also to be patient in sowing because as Christians we are called to sow the seed of the gospel that's what we are really doing every time we preach the word every time we do anything as a church we are sowing the seed but sowing by definition as we were saying to the children is a process that requires immense patience when a farmer scatter seed he has to wait and he has to be patient and Paul reminds us of that in

[25 : 30] Galatians 6 as we read earlier the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life and let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up Paul is emphasizing the need for patience as a church and please remember that every single thing you do for God is sowing a seed every time you pray for somebody and for their conversion you are sowing a seed every act of kindness you show to your neighbor you are sowing a seed every time we try and reach out as a church whether it's in youth fellowship or holiday club or top thoughts or road to recovery or whatever else it may be we are sowing seeds and every time we meet together to worship and to study God's word we are sowing seeds scattering seeds in the ground scattering seeds and all we have to be is patient and at the heart of the gospel work is patience because we are sowing a seed that

God will bring to fruition in his time it's a great reminder that numbers in a church don't matter they don't matter what matters is this that we are faithfully sowing the truth of God's word in people's hearts so we are to be patient in suffering we are to be patient in sowing thirdly and last of all and maybe most importantly we are to be patient with sinners in the letter to the Galatians Paul is writing to a church that is not in a healthy condition it's right he's running to a church that's gone far wrong mistakes have been made and the situation is very distressing and that's true of other churches that he wrote to as well Corinthian churches another very clear example and yet at the heart of Paul's letter is the fact that he is showing these people that he is committed to them for the long term and his purpose in writing is not to criticise it's not to split the church it's not to judge the church in Galatia it's to bring them healing that's why he says in Galatians 6 1 which we read brothers if anyone is caught in any transgression you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness keep watch on yourselves lest you too be tempted bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ and he makes the very same emphases elsewhere he says in Ephesians 4 I therefore a prisoner of the

Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called with all humility and gentleness with patience bearing with one another in love eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace same again in Colossians 3 put on then as God's chosen ones holy and beloved compassionate hearts kindness humility meekness and patience bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive and so Paul is reminding us that our relationship to one another must always always be one of patience and that means quite simply having a long term view of one another because one thing is certain in life that that people will will will make a mistake people will bother us people will maybe even get on their nerves but in that situation God is telling us to take a long term view remember that that person who's just mucked up or just done something silly or just got on your nerves that person is a work in progress just like we are and we are all learning we are all growing and

God is sanctifying us all and Paul reminds us in Colossians 3 that at the heart of that is the fact that we forgive one another we don't keep our record of wrong we don't hold grudges but we patiently lovingly forgive one another and it's reminding us of the vital fact that unity and patience go hand in hand and that's a really important thing to grasp the church of Jesus Christ is to be united and if it's going to be it's got to be patient theologically we are one in Jesus Christ united to one another therefore in real life we should be like that too and the only way that will happen is if we are patient with one another so if you come across a Christian who thinks differently from you maybe they've got weird views on something God says be patient you may know people who might get on your nerves they might push your buttons they might just be a wee bit not your kind of person we often talk about personality clash don't we and I'm not that keen on that phrase because sometimes I think it's an excuse just to be rude to each other but people will say that personality clash God says you meet somebody who gets on your nerves be patient and even if someone hurts us even if someone offends us really offends us really does something horrible to us God says be patient as God's people we are to bear the fruit of patience we are committed to each other for the long term even if you muck up we are to be patient and sometimes sometimes maybe more than anything else you have to be patient with yourself because I don't know about you I think that for most of us the biggest source of frustration in our lives is not other people but ourselves and we make the same mistakes again and again and again and we stumble over the same stones again and again and again in our lives and yet God is telling us that he's patient and we have to be patient with ourselves we make a mistake we repent of it we acknowledge it and we press on we must all be patient with others and with ourselves and all of that is the fact because of the fact that God is patient God thinks in the long term and we are to be patient we must also think long term but what if you're not yet a Christian what if you're maybe uncertain of things what if you're seeking or uncertain or maybe not that interested at all if what what if you're just not not in the position where you'd say yeah I am a Christian what does God think of you what does God think of you well I can tell you he is still patient and he has not given up he has not given up and he is calling you again today and he has always had a long term view of you maybe you look back and think I had a chance long ago but I blew it I wasted it I've wandered off now and I'm too far gone I've mucked up not true never true because

God is a long-term thinker and so it doesn't matter how long you've been wondering or seeking or thinking it's not a problem to God it is not a problem to God because he's patient and he thinks in the long term and all he wants is for you just to come into his arms and trust in him he's just calling you patiently lovingly faithfully calling you and so the vital question is not really whether God thinks in the long term because he does the vital question really for you is do you have a long term view of yourself that's a really important question are you thinking about yourself and about your life in the long term because one thing through of life in 2017 is that it is unbelievably easy to be short term to go from day to day and week to week busy busy busy busy busy I can't believe that this time next week is going to be April time just goes by and it's so easy to just be caught up in the busyness of life and all we're thinking about is one day to the next or one week to the next but this is where we have to stop and say when was the last time you thought of yourself in the long term when did you last think like that really last thing about where you are where you are going in the long term what's going to happen to you long term what are the things that really matter these are the questions we've got to grapple with and as we think of these things remember the fact that God is patiently patiently holding out his hand to you and saying come to me come to me never forget that God is patient that means that he'll never turn you away and it means that you can come to him right now let's pray.