

The Fruit of the Spirit – Longsuffering (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let this MIND be in you! - Philippians 2:5-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In discussing "the fruit of the Spirit", the nine graces listed in Ga 5:22-23 are often divided into three groups:

- a. The first group contains those graces which turn one's thought toward God...
 - 1) Love
 - 2) Joy
 - 3) Peace
- b. The second group contains those graces that direct our attention to our fellow man...
 - 4) Longsuffering
 - 5) Kindness
 - 6) Goodness
- c. The third group of graces refers more directly to oneself...
 - 7) Faithfulness
 - 8) Gentleness (meekness)
 - 9) Self-control

2. Having examined those graces in the first group (love, joy, peace), we now come to the first one in the second group...

- a. The grace is "longsuffering" ("patience".)
- b. The Greek word is makrothumia
 - 1) Literally, it means being "long-tempered" (the opposite of short-tempered)
 - 2) It is defined as "patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs" (THAYER)
 - 3) "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy, and is used of God." (VINE)
- c. If God is longsuffering, we should not be surprised that those who "walk in the Spirit" are also longsuffering!

[As we seek to work in conjunction with the Spirit of God to develop His fruit in our lives, it might be helpful to nurture longsuffering by recalling some...]

I. EXAMPLES OF LONGSUFFERING

A. THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD...

1. God has been longsuffering toward man
 - a. He was in the days of Noah - 1 Pe 3:20
 - b. He was in His dealings with the nation of Israel - Neh 9:16-21
 - c. And He is longsuffering today as well - 2 Pe 3:7-9; e.g., 1 Ti 1:15-16
2. The purpose of His longsuffering:

- a. That we might have salvation! - 2 Pe 3:15
- b. That we might be led to repentance! - Ro 2:4
- c. That those who fear Him and keep His commandments might delight in His loving-kindness, even though they have sinned. cf. Ps 103:8-18

B. THE LONGSUFFERING OF DAVID...

- 1. Is best seen in his dealings with King Saul
 - a. Saul had made several attempts to kill David
 - b. David had several opportunities to kill Saul
 - 1) In the cave - 1 Sam 24:1-22
 - 2) In the camp - 1 Sam 26:1-25
- 2. Out of respect for the Lord's anointed king (Saul), David demonstrated the true meaning of longsuffering: "slowness in avenging wrongs"

[So from both God Himself and one who was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14), we learn what the quality of longsuffering involves. Now let's consider its necessity in the life of the Christian...]

II. THE NECESSITY OF LONGSUFFERING

A. NECESSARY IF WE WISH GOD TO BE LONGSUFFERING TO US...

- 1. As Jesus illustrated in "The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant" (note particularly Mt 18:32-35)
- 2. Compare also the following verses: Co 3:12-13
 - a. Christ has forgiven us
 - b. Therefore we must be longsuffering and willing to forgive one another!

B. NECESSARY TO MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT...

- 1. A task we face, in keeping with a walk that is worthy of our calling - Ep 4:1-3
- 2. Without longsuffering, the sins we commit against one another will quickly destroy the unity for which Christ died!

C. NECESSARY FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS OF THE GOSPEL...

- 1. As Paul charged Timothy - 2 Ti 4:2
- 2. As Paul had demonstrated by example - 2 Ti 3:10
- 3. No servant of the Lord can faithfully correct those in opposition, without the quality of longsuffering (patience in the NKJV) - 2 Ti 2:24-26

[So to be "useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (cf. 2 Ti 2:21), and even to ensure God's longsuffering toward us (cf. Mt 18:35), we need to develop the virtue of longsuffering. Here are a couple of thoughts on how...]

III. DEVELOPING LONGSUFFERING

A. THROUGH LOVE...

- 1. It is love that "suffers long" - cf. 1 Co 13:4-8a

- a. Unless we love those who have wronged us, there will not be sufficient motivation to bear with them
 - b. Therefore love (active good will) is fundamental to being slow to avenge wrong
2. By growing in love (to remember how, cf. 1 Th 4:9; 1 Jn 3:16), we will grow in patience!

B. THROUGH PRAYER...

- 1. Paul evidently believed prayer would help the Colossians to have "all patience and longsuffering with joy" - Co 1:9-11
- 2. Certainly the God who is longsuffering (cf. Ps 145:8) will strengthen those who desire to be like Him!

CONCLUSION

1. God has certainly revealed Himself to be longsuffering, as David wrote in his psalm:

"But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth." - Ps 86:15

2. For those who desire to be truly His children, and led by His Spirit, they will want to become like Him, as David wrote just a few verses before:

"Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth;" - Ps 86:11a

3. The way of the Lord is truly one involving longsuffering, and it will be a quality evident in the lives of those who bear the fruit of the Spirit!

May the Lord help us to be longsuffering with those around us! May we also be careful to respond to the Lord's longsuffering toward us in the proper way... - cf. Ro 2:4-6