

Love is Patient (1 Corinthians 13:4)

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Word Definitions / Verse List

The New Testament Greek Words (from Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon):

makrothumeo

to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart; hence: 1) to persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles; 2) to be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish

makrothumia

1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance (esp. as shown in bearing troubles and ills; 2) patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

makrothumos

with longanimity, i.e., patiently [Acts 26:3]

Contrast with ENDURANCE/PERSEVERANCE

(= hupomone, 1 Corinthians 13:7)

The following contrasts form a general rule or guideline. Exceptions may exist (but would be indicated by context).

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon:

- PATIENCE / LONGSUFFERING: The self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong - opposed to wrath or revenge.
- ENDURANCE / PERSEVERANCE: The temper which does not easily succumb under suffering - opposed to cowardice or despondency.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words:

- PATIENCE / LONGSUFFERING: 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.
 - ENDURANCE / PERSEVERANCE: The quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope; it is not used of God.
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The following verses contain the word "Patience" (or the related verb or adjective forms):

- Matthew 18:26,29; Luke 18:7; Acts 26:3; Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:10; 4:2; Hebrews 6:12, 15; James 5:7 (used twice), 8, 10; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9, 15

These two verses are not used in this study:

- Luke 18:7 (The Greek word is used in a different way: God will not keep "putting off" those who cry out to him for justice.)
 - Acts 26:3 (Paul to Agrippa: "Listen to me patiently")
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OUTLINE: What does the Bible say about PATIENCE?

[** Read the context of these verses. **]

I. About God's Patience

1. It is rich/plentiful, great, perfect/without limit
 - Romans 2:4 - the riches of [God's] ... patience
 - Romans 9:22 - God bore with much patience those who would be the objects of his wrath.
 - 1 Timothy 1:16 - God's unlimited patience displayed in Paul
 2. It is NOT to be confused with "slowness"
 - 2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow in doing what he promised... He is patient with you. (He gives you the opportunity to repent.)
 3. It has a purpose: it allows us the opportunity to repent
 - 2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is ... patient with you. He does not want anyone to perish; he wants all to come to repentance.
 - 2 Peter 3:15 - our Lord's patience should be interpreted as an opportunity for salvation
 - Romans 2:4 - Do you despise the riches of God's kindness / tolerance / patience? Don't you realize that God's kindness (etc.) is meant to lead you to/toward repentance? (See the verses which follow.)
 4. Example of Patience with those who would become saved:
 - 1 Timothy 1:16 - Paul (the *worst* of sinners) was shown mercy. This was so that Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience in Paul. This would be an example/encouragement for those who (in the future) would believe in Jesus and receive eternal life.
 5. Example of Patience with those who would *not* become saved:
 - 1 Peter 3:20 - Those who disobeyed long ago, in Noah's day. God waited patiently while the ark was being built.
 - Romans 9:22 - God bore with much patience those who would be the objects of his wrath.
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II. Our obligation to be patient

1. All of us are given the command to be patient
 - Ephesians 4:2 - be patient; bear with one another in love
 - Colossians 3:12 - clothe yourselves with ... patience
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:14 - be patient with everyone
 2. Those who are suffering in trials are to be patient. The Lord (the One who will make things right) is near!
 - James 5:7-8 - Be patient, brothers, until the Lord returns. Be patient and don't give-up, because the Lord's coming is near.
 3. Leaders are to perform their duties with patience. [Example: Timothy]
 - 2 Timothy 4:2 - Preach the Word; be ready at all times (whether convenient or not). Correct, rebuke and encourage--very patiently and being careful in what you say (teach).
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III. Specific Details Regarding Our Patience

1. We *can* have patience because of God's strength in us [See also the connection between that strength and prayer: the context.]
 - Colossians 1:11 - ...being strengthened (with all power that comes from his glorious might) so that you will have all the endurance and patience you need... [One of the consequences of Paul's prayer for them.]
2. We *must* have patience if we expect God's forgiveness [Patience, expressed not merely in external words, but as an expression of the heart.] (Illustrated in a parable)
 - Matthew 18:26,29 (and context) -
 - a. The servant to his master: "Be patient with me..." ...the servant's master had pity/sorrow for him, canceled/forgave his debt and let him go free.
 - b. Another servant to the first servant: "Be patient with me..." ...but he (the first servant) refused to be patient.
 - c. The master to the first servant: Shouldn't you have had mercy/pity for your fellow servant - the same way I did for you? (Then his master, in anger, turned him over to be tortured/punished [in prison], until his debt was paid back.)
 - d. (Jesus says:) This is what my heavenly Father will do to you unless, you forgive your brother/sister from your heart.
3. Patience is a manifestation of the Spirit's presence; a manifestation of love
 - Galatians 5:22 - the fruit of the Spirit is... patience
 - 1 Corinthians 13:4 - Love is patient

IV. Examples of Patience We Can Follow / Imitate

1. We are to imitate those who patiently wait for what God promised them [example: Abraham]
 - Hebrews 6:12, 15 - We do not want you to become lazy. We want you to follow the example of those who inherit what was promised. (They do so through faith and patience.) [Example...] - Abraham waited patiently; then he received what God promised him.

2. Examples to consider when we are experiencing trials: the farmer and the prophets
 - James 5:7b-8 - Pay attention to the example of the farmer: He waits for the land to yield its precious harvest; he patiently waits for the fall and spring rains. Like him, you must be patient and don't give-up (the Lord will be returning soon).
 - James 5:10 - Here is an example of patience during suffering: the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [also, an example of endurance / perseverance: Job (v. 11)]

3. The open, visible example of the apostles
 - 2 Corinthians 6:6 - [... we do everything in a way that is commendable for a servant of God:]... (example:) our patience [See context for many other characteristics.]
 - 2 Timothy 3:10 - You know all about my ... patience (etc.)

THE BIGGER PICTURE: "Patience" Occurs in What Type of Context?

"PATIENCE" IS...

- A necessary dimension of salvation - Heb. 6:9-15
- Related to forgiveness - Matt. 18:21-35
- Related to following the leading/footsteps of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-25

"PATIENTLY" IS THE WAY...

- We are to face suffering and trials - James 5:1-11
- We are to preach the Word of God - 2 Timothy 4:1-5

"PATIENCE" IS PART OF... LIFE!

- The life of a servant of God - 2 Corinthians 6:3-10; 2 Timothy 3:10-11
 - The way we are required to live - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22
 - Living worthy of our calling - Ephesians 4:1-3
 - Living worthy of the Lord, pleasing him, knowing his will - Colossians 1:9-12
 - Living as God's chosen people - Colossians 3:12-17
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Other Concepts that Frequently Occur in the Same Context

(3 or more times):

- Love: 1 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:10
- Kindness, being kind: 1 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12
- Peace: Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; 2 Peter 3:14
- Thankful, giving thanks: Colossians 1:12; Colossians 3:15, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Patient endurance: 2 Corinthians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:10; James 5:11 [Some other verses use similar words.]
- Faith, faithfulness: Galatians 5:22; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 6:12
- Gentleness: Galatians 5:23; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12

[Of course the other concepts - which occur only 1 or 2 times in the context - will also be important!]

QUESTIONS:

Note: You may include anything else you can find in Scripture, as you consider these questions.

- Examine the definition of "patience." To what extent does this describe the way you react when you are wronged by others? To what extent do you become filled with anger and a desire for revenge?

- What would happen if God were not patient with us? How should our awareness of God's patience toward us affect us (and our patience toward others)?
- How should the examples of God's patience toward the apostle Paul encourage us? Has God's patience had an effect on your life? On your eternal life?
- What happens when people despise God's patience? Think about God's patience toward the unsaved in Noah's day. How did they respond to his patience? Should this be a warning to people today?
- What is the relationship between patience and forgiveness? What is the significance of the phrase "from the heart" in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant? (Matt. 18:21-35) What type of heart is capable of having the forgiveness (and patience) that is required by God?
- Examples of patience are given to us in several passages. How can you benefit from (or be encouraged by) these examples?
- When do we need patience? How is patience related to living as a disciple of Jesus? What is an impatient lifestyle indicative of?
- Other concepts (character qualities, actions, etc.) are frequently mentioned in the same context as patience. How is patience related to these other concepts? Can you have these other character qualities *without* having patience (or patience without these other qualities)? Explain.
- If your patience is weak, how can it be strengthened? What could God do to provide you with an opportunity to grow in this area of your life? Do you want your patience to be strengthened?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE...

- If you lack patience, and have become convinced that you need it, God will most likely bring circumstances into your life which will provide the opportunity for your patience to be increased. Prepare for such times *before* they arrive, and you will be better equipped for them. Think about the things you learned in this study. Be ready to remind yourself about them when trials come your way. Focus on what the Bible says about patience and trials, and re-evaluate your circumstances based upon what God says about them. It may also be beneficial for you to study the related concept of endurance/perseverance.