

Thinking Around : 'It takes the wanting out of waiting'

The slogan in the title was used by the Access credit card in the late 80s or early 90s. Many would suggest that this mentality has led to people (and governments) piling up debt they could not afford an hence to the present financial problems. Do you this has been a contributory factor.

Does our wanting to cultivate the fruit of patience have any implications for how we should look at borrowing or debt?

Would you say that this is a significant problem in our area?

The Church Council has agreed to look at whether we might as a Church work with a Christian organisation that helps people struggling with money issues and particularly debt. Do you think there is a need for this and do you think this is something we should be doing.

Are there other areas of life where you think people want things that in the past they might have been encouraged to wait for?

David Phillips, May 2012

The Fruit of the Spirit is ... patience ...



Bible Study 4 on Gal 5.22-23

The Greek word for this fruit is *makrothumia*. *Thumia* means wrath or anger, whilst *makrothumia* word means to restrain wrath or anger. Patience or long-suffering are the commonest translations.

We will also come across the word - *hupomone* - which is usually translated as endurance or perseverance.

1. Slow to Anger

In early Greek translations of the Old Testament the word for patience is commonly used in verses like Number 14.18 and Nahum 1.3. The sense is that God would be right to show his anger but...

Read 1 Timothy ch 1 vv 12-17.

Despite Paul's obvious piety as a Jew what does he suggest would have justified God in showing his wrath?

In what way does he say God was patient with Him?

Why does he say God did this?

If you had been an early Christian, knowing that Paul was at the murder of Stephen and how he had dragged believers off to prison, would you have thought that Paul might come to faith in Christ?

Are there people today who we find it difficult to believe that they might come to faith?

Our Church motto begins 'to win people for Christ'. What are the implications of verse 15 for for living this out?

Notice how Paul, having written about how God had been gracious to him turns to praise in verse 17. You might like to do the same as a group.

2. The unforgiving servant

Paul had been forgiven much, and so have we.

Read Matthew ch 18 vv 21-35.

Do you have a sense of how much God has forgiven you in Christ? Is it easier for some people to realise this, possibly because of their background?

To what extent does our sense of sin depend on understanding how we have sinned and to what extent on our understanding of the holiness of God?

What does the absurdly large debt in Jesus' parable (equivalent to at least £2.5 billion) suggest about how much God has forgiven us?

What is the key point that Jesus wants us to learn from this parable?

The word 'patience' occurs in verse 26 and 29 in a petition. What is being asked for in each case?

How did the king show patience?

How did the servant not show patience?

What lesson can you draw from this about ways in which we should show this fruit of patience?

Can you think of examples of this, either from your own experience, or things you have heard or read about?

3. The Fruit

In addition to Galatians patience is listed as a fruit or virtue in passages such as 2 Corinthians ch 6 v 6 and Ephesians ch 2 v 2.

If you were asked to write an entry on this fruit for the Chorley Bible Dictionary, given what we have seen so far, what would you write?

Are you the sort of person who gets impatient in a queue or when a train or bus is late?

Is the idea of restraining wrath the same as our normal understanding of patience or does it seem different to you?

4. Until He comes

Why is the return of Christ something to look forward to?

Read James ch 5 vv 7-9

What are some of the troubles and problems we face whilst we wait for Christ's return? (If you have time in preparation you might like to read through James' letter and see what he mentions.)

Thinking of the things you have mentioned, in what ways do we need this fruit of patience?

Read James ch 5 vv10-11

In verse 10 James mentions patience in the face of suffering. Do you think this is different or in any way more difficult to the other things you identified above?

In verse 11 we come across the word hupomone, translated by the NIV as 'perseverance'. The King James Bible translates our fruit as 'longsuffering' and this word as 'patience' and hence has the well known expression 'the patience of Job'. The etymology of our word patient is from the word pathos - suffering. That is why someone in hospital is called a patient, a sufferer.

The example of Job is all very well, but his suffering had a happy outcome. For many people suffering, particularly in old age, can seem to be without relief. Why is it important therefore to see that James uses this example whilst encouraging us to wait patiently for Christ's return?

is there a danger of taking God's patience for granted